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THE  
GREAT CONSPIRACY

ROBERTS

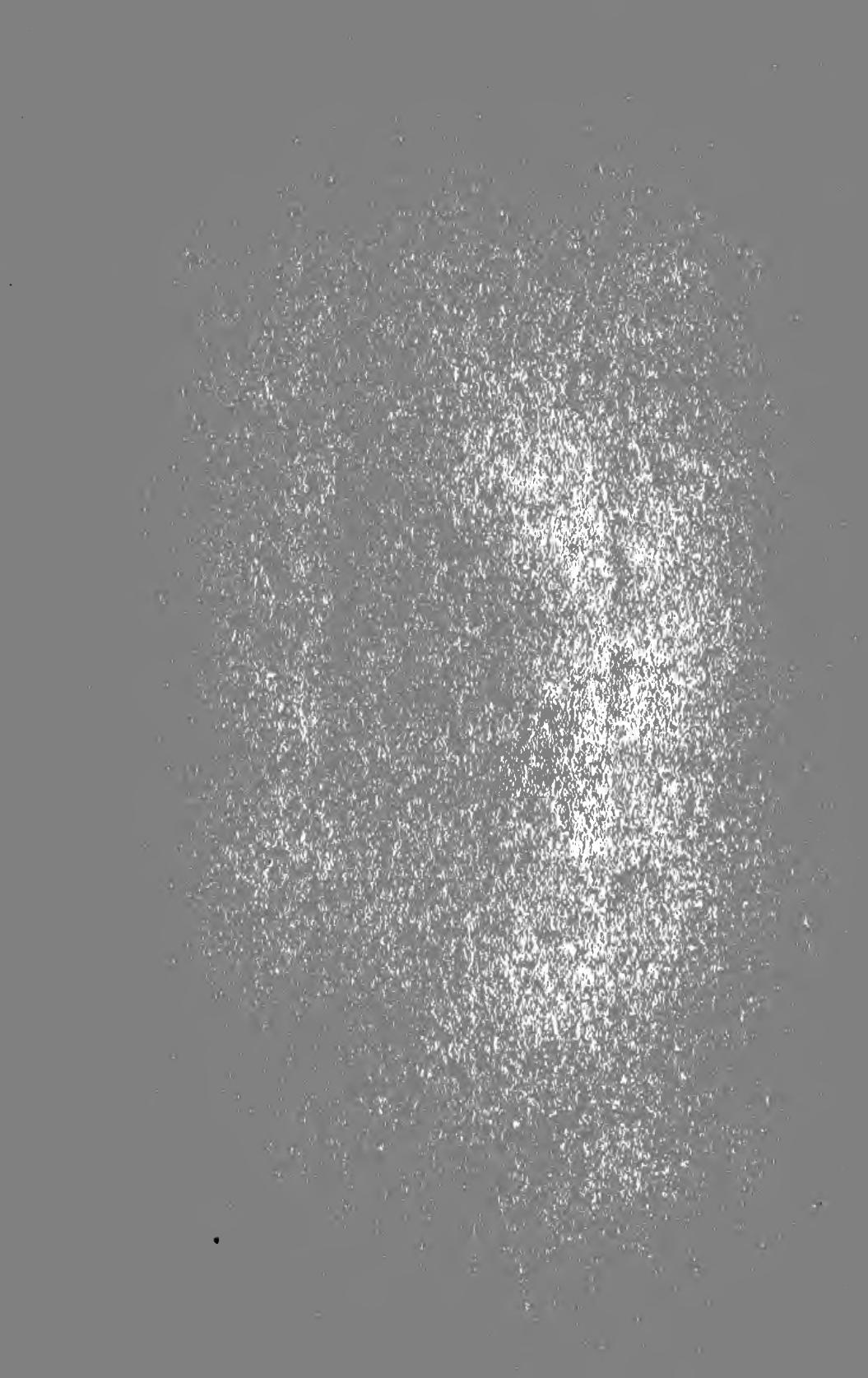


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# **THE GREAT CONSPIRACY**

**BY THE SAME AUTHOR**

**LOUVAIN: A Tragedy of the Invasion of Belgium**

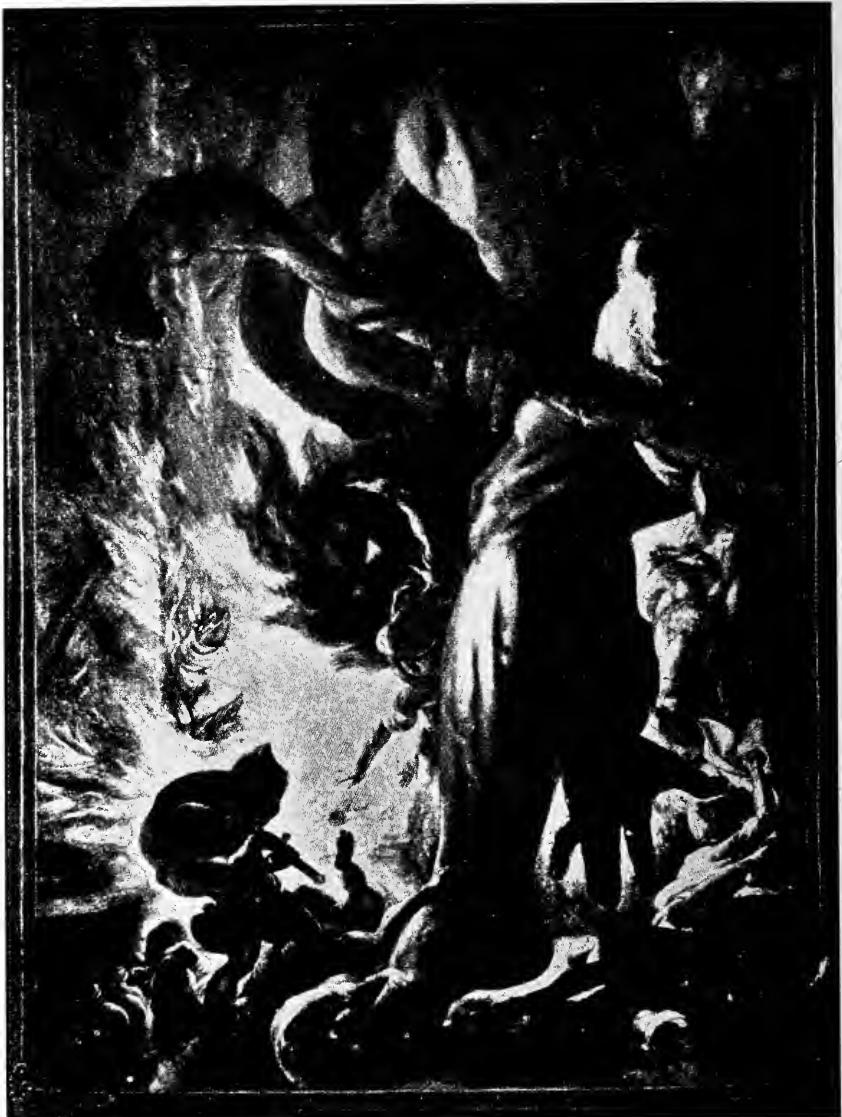
**THAISA: A Tragedy in the days of Nero. With Frontispiece from  
a drawing by Andre Castaigne**

**OCTAVIA AND NEW POEMS**

**COLLECTED POEMS**

**THE CALL OF SORROW**





"O shattered side of conscience! standest thou  
A monument to memory's despair  
That's taller than Hell's everlasting fire.  
Thou art the giantship of punishment."

*Cleopatra*, Scene I, page 20

# THE GREAT CONSPIRACY

AN EPIC DRAMA IN NINE SCENES  
WRITTEN IN PROSE AND VERSE

BY

CHARLES V. H. ROBERTS

"  
AUTHOR OF "THAISA," "LOUVAIN," "THE CALL OF  
SORROW," ETC.



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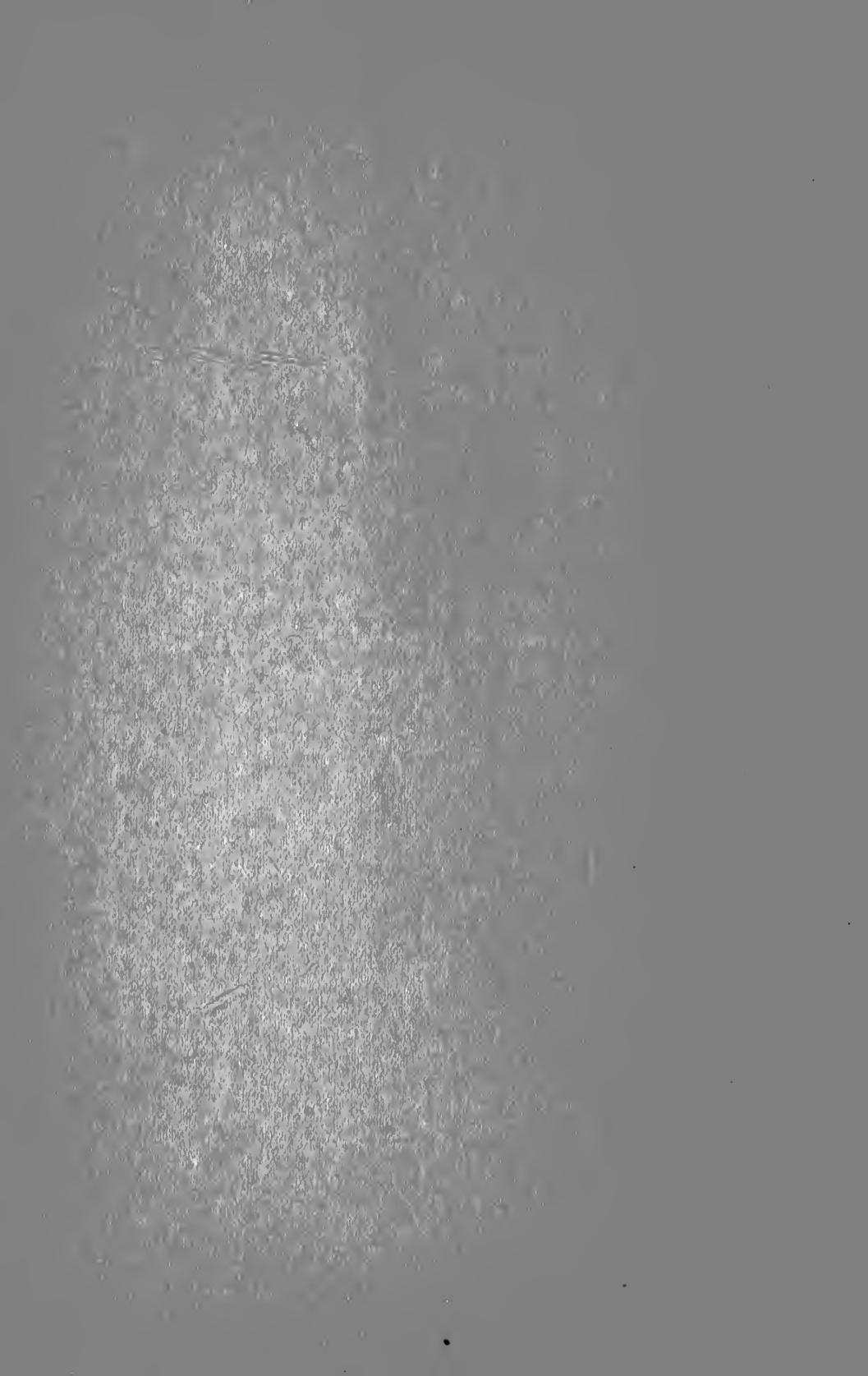
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*To the Memory of  
My Father  
Frank M. Roberts*



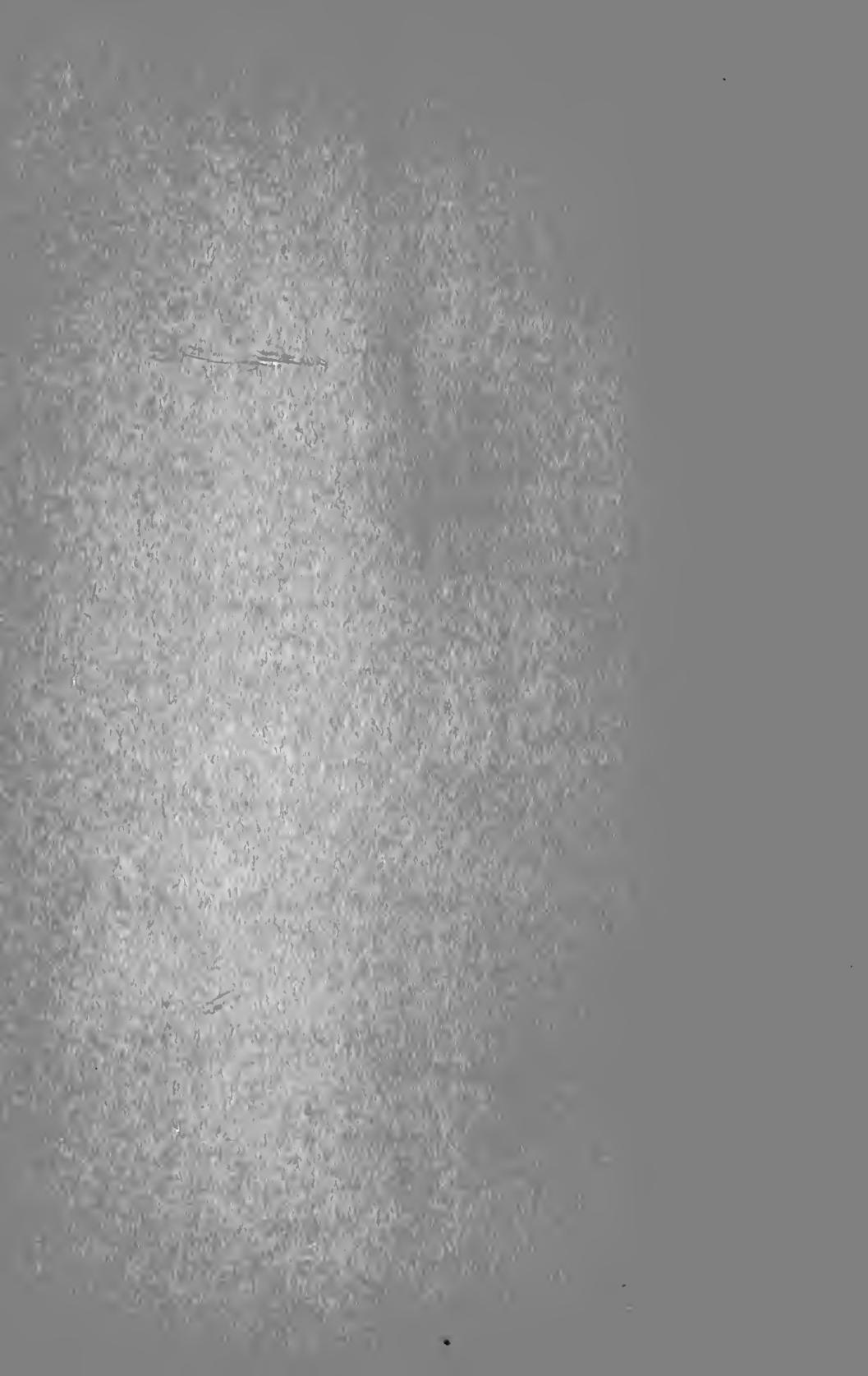
## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

This drama is in part a revision of "The Sublime Sacrifice" by the same author, which is now entirely out of print



## SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

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# CHARACTERS OF THE DRAMA

## IMMORTALS

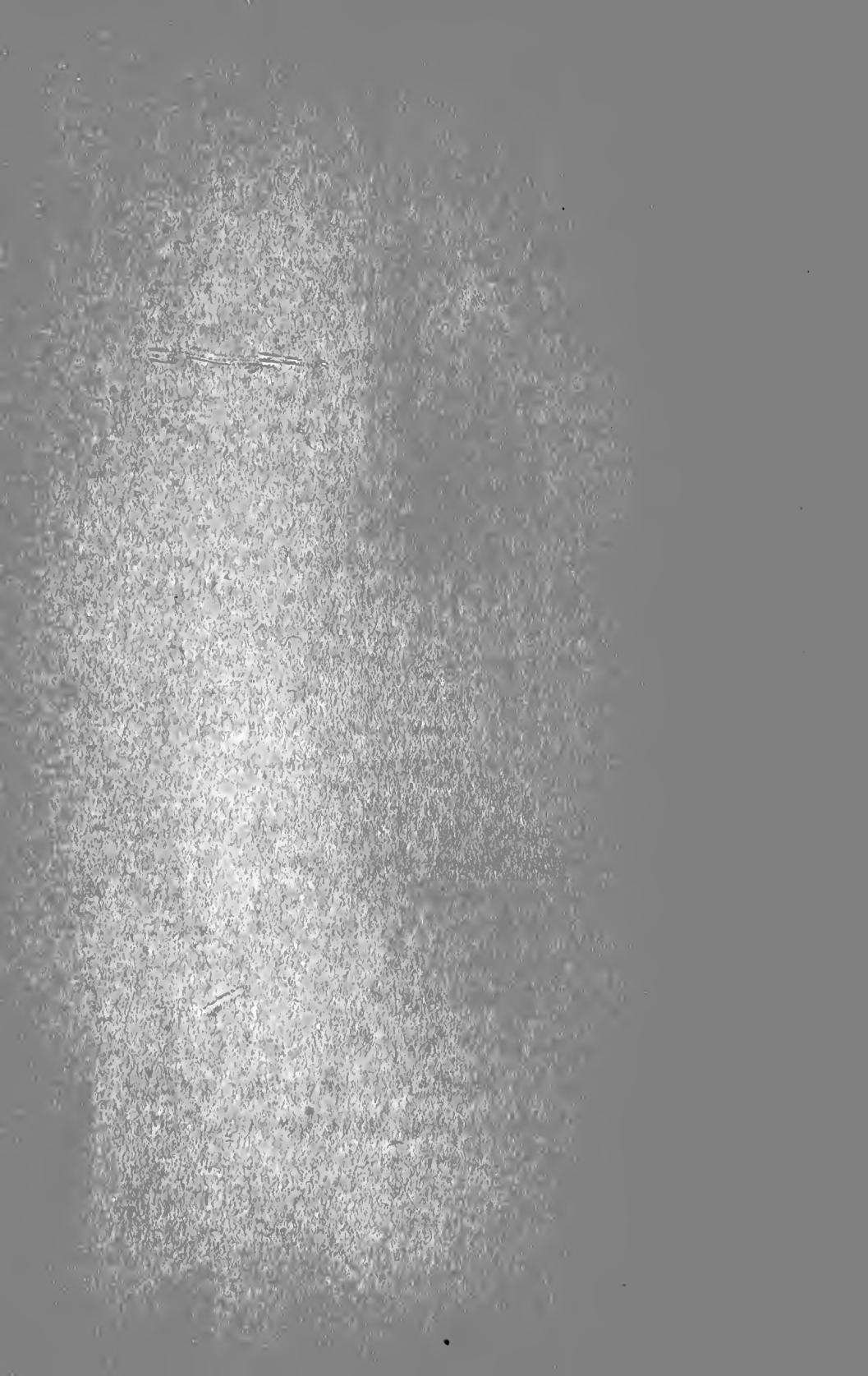
SATAN-----*The King of Hell*  
BEELZEBUB-----*Next in Power to Satan*  
MOLOCH-----*The Fiend of War*  
THE SPIRIT OF NERO  
THE SPIRIT OF MARC ANTONY  
THE SPIRIT OF ATTILA  
THE SPIRIT OF RICHARD III  
THE SPIRIT OF BISMARCK  
THE SPIRIT OF CLEOPATRA  
DEVILS, SERVANTS, MENIALS TO THE COURT OF SATAN,  
ETC., ETC.

## MORTALS

THE "ALL-HIGHEST"-----*War-Lord of Germany*  
GENERAL KARL VON HOFEN  
*Commander of German Army in Flanders*  
CAPTAIN FREDERICK HARRACH }  
LIEUTENANT HORST }  
BARON FREIDERICK VON DER ACHEN  
*On von Hofen's Staff*  
*Of the Political Department at Brussels*  
AN AIDE TO BARON VON DER ACHEN  
SIR JOHN STEELE  
*Capt. R. A. F., betrothed to Edith Vernon*  
THE AMERICAN MINISTER TO BELGIUM  
THE SPANISH MINISTER TO BELGIUM  
A CHAPLAIN  
EDITH VERNON-----*An English Red Cross Nurse*  
THE BARONESS VON DER ACHEN  
SOLDIERS, STRETCHER BEARERS, ORDERLIES, TRENCH  
DIGGERS, SERVANTS, ETC., ETC.



## **SCENE I**



## *SCENE I*

*The curtain rising discloses a cavern in Pandemonium, the huge palace of the Arch-Fiend.*

*It is dark, except for green and red lights that flicker grimly on the walls. From the ceiling there is a continual movement as of wings and flying things. Distant wailings and moanings are heard. A dim mist of smoke comes down at intervals followed by lurid flashes of lightning.*

*As the scene progresses the light grows stronger.*

*In the center at back Satan is discovered sitting in sinister majesty on a high throne. Beelzebub and Moloch stand on either side of their master.*

*Through a low opening to the left, spirit shapes and shadowy forms are entering. They approach in pairs, some few cowering in fear and terror, others walking erect; all prostrate themselves before Satan.*

*The spirits of Nero, Marc Antony, Attila, Richard III, Bismarck, and many other notables of history appear. These intermingle with throngs of devils and menials conspicuous with their forked horns. The warriors are distinguished by their respective costumes, head-gear, and armor.*

**SATAN (as a hush falls over the conclave).**

I bid you welcome here, my noble fiends,  
So that our learned talk may be extended.

[*With his sceptre he motions all to rise*]

Not as disgusting worms—  
Adjust now all your memories for my  
chat  
Of damning trust where evil's sanctified.

[*Looking upward*]

Observe a Doctrine that destroys itself  
And yet it has survived too many suns.  
Of Christ I speak, a feeble Stammerer,  
Who shouts His soulful metres oft in vain  
To herds of monks and priests. They're  
underlings;

Their churches are kennels where frail  
Goodness breeds  
And later spreads in foul preëminence.  
Aye, this concerns our glory. Come near-  
er.

In confidence wherefor I wish to speak:  
The worst that I can say will prove the  
best.

[*For a moment there is a horrible sound  
of moaning winds*]

BEELZEBUB.

O mighty Satan, hail!

CHORUS OF VOICES (*all making obeisance*).

Hail, ruler of Hell!

MOLOCH.

And all wild things of immortality.

[*Suddenly in the aperture, the figure of a woman appears robed in a flaming Egyptian mantle. Her head is decked and glittering with jewels*]

[*Enter CLEOPATRA. She is followed by a score of sister-fiends who rush about in wild confusion*]

[*With clenched fists and tears in her eyes the famous queen makes appealing gestures to SATAN. She tears jewels from her gown and hair and casts them at her feet*]

[*SATAN, however, does not heed her, but instead with growing impatience beckons some of his servants to remove both CLEOPATRA and her following from the cavern*]

[*Marc Antony is now discovered pushing his way through the throng. He approaches to where CLEOPATRA is standing*]

CLEOPATRA (*recognizing her former lover*).

O Antony! O Love so humbled here!

[*Throwing herself in his arms*]

Canst thou remember Egypt? thy Cleopatra?

ANTONY.

The perfume of her presence fills my soul.

CLEOPATRA (*sorrowfully*).

Changed is thy visage, dear Marc Antony.

[*Appealing to SATAN*]

Have we not burned for two long thousand years?

Fain cast thy power o'er this deviltry.

[*Again to ANTONY*]

Clasp me, you favoring arms!

Why dost thou gaze at me so anxiously?  
Here is my body cold as ice yet charred  
And burning inwardly. Call out my name

As I did thine beholding thee in death  
Prone on my couch in Alexandria!

I pray thee build a wall about my soul  
Where I may feel as when the moon-beams wrapt

Us round in their soft silver nakedness,  
My head upon thy breast, while glided we  
Through mists stirred only by the wings  
of love

Adown the waters of the swaying Nile.

[*Sadly*]

To think that I was beautiful.

ANTONY.

These flames,  
Scarcely have they advancéd on thy beauty.

CLEOPATRA.

Stagger thou now, my half-crazed mem-  
ory!

Ah Antony, why here this death undying?  
If cease we ever will, let's perish now.

[*Kissing him passionately*]

O let these lips, while lips, be kissed again.

ANTONY (*in tones of deep pity*).

Here sympathy's defiled. Ah, Cleopatra!  
As never love from the beginning died,  
Nor sepulchre diviner beauty held,  
This vengeance on thee doth seem cow-  
ardly,  
E'en through our dark realities of soul.

CLEOPATRA (*bitterly*).

Ah, had we ended when we loved. O stay!  
Whence comes this lonely wail from out  
the past,

Close yet unseen, no signs, but syllables?

[*With agitation*]

O shattered side of conscience! standest thou

A monument to memory's despair  
That's taller than Hell's everlasting fire.  
Thou art the giantship of punishment.

[*More calmly*]

My soul is fettered, but my heart is free;  
Though withered, still can give forth  
amorous beats.

[BEELZEBUB *approaches with a flaming  
whip in his hand. CLEOPATRA clings  
more closely to ANTONY*]

BEELZEBUB (*to CLEOPATRA, and raising his  
whip*).

Down on thy face!

CLEOPATRA (*to ANTONY*).

Save me, thy once beloved!  
Some relic of thy moldering strength is left.

[*Cowering in terror from BEELZEBUB*]

O there, O turn that hideous fiend away!

ANTONY (*shielding CLEOPATRA*).

Ah Beelzebub, is not sufficient laden  
Upon her soul by these injurious gods?

SATAN (*rising in anger and pointing to CLEOPATRA*).

Now cease this nauseous prattling instantly  
And throw that writhing wanton from  
my view.

[*At this command and against their piteous cries of protest, CLEOPATRA is torn from ANTONY, and with her sister fiends forced roughly from the cavern*]

[*ANTONY appears dumfounded, but quickly recovers his composure seeing SATAN is about to address him*]

SATAN.

What wouldest thou, Antony?

ANTONY.

To hear thee, Sire.

SATAN (*with a smile*).

Ever the snare was set for thee by women.  
They flatter to the last. Shun them, my  
Roman.

Howe'er, the passioning breasts of maid-  
enhood

Have led a swarm of bravest men to Hell.

[*Waving ANTONY aside and turning  
to BEELZEBUB*]

But now I will proceed. Beelzebub, see  
To it there're no more interruptions.

A monstrous plan doth flame within my  
soul

At which Tri-named, Tri-featured God  
shall tremble.

MOLOCH.

Ha, we will hear thee, Satan, we will hear  
thee.

If there be God, if there be God, 'tis  
thou.

[*The warriors flock about MOLOCH*]

CHORUS OF VOICES (*looking towards SATAN*).

Speak, speak—

BEELZEBUB (*interrupting them angrily*).

Silence, ye babbling menials!

And keep your forkéd horns there fur-  
ther off.

All are not privileged in this great con-  
clave

Save those whose vile exploits are well  
recorded.

NERO (*haughtily*).

Look to the record, Beelzebub; be sure  
I'm there for deathless deeds of violence,  
And high enrolled for butchery and lust.

BEELZEBUB.

Silence, thou juggler of antiquity!  
Boast not of what thou wast but what thou  
art.

NERO (*angrily*).

Regard thyself, I am a Roman Cæsar.

[*The spirits group about BEELZEBUB  
and NERO who start quarreling; they  
are on the verge of a fierce encounter  
when SATAN interrupts*]

SATAN.

Purge off this wrangling now and hear  
me, Peers,

Not in the stormy atmosphere of souls.

But with the zeal that is befitting us  
In our conspicuous catastrophe.

[*All now become attentive and the com-  
motion ceases*]

Learn what must be encountered and o'er-  
come:

My wits err not—high there upon the  
Earth

Has Civilization breded long enough,  
With us no nearer to the Infinite;  
Sloth is intolerable here in Hell  
And our inaction must be shaken up  
Away from lukewarm blood and clem-  
ency.

MOLOCH.

O tell us what means Lucifer, my lord?

SATAN.

O ye sacred bells! 'Tis Evil that I call,  
For Evil lives when Goodness turns to  
slime.

Heed ye the words of immortality,  
Where Power's framed with all-prolific  
humor.

My plan is one of demolition

Carved out of thunder by the blade of  
Chaos.

None have so much of death that there's  
no death,

For worms will gnaw forever on the soul  
Begrimed within the sphere of my con-  
trol.

May prayer dissolve forever to our bliss!

[*Looking upward and making the sign  
of the Cross*]

Grin on Thou Skull! there on Thy cruci-  
fix!

Behold! am I not Lucifer? Thine Angel  
Created next to Thee, then dispossessed,  
Cast into this foul-spinning twisted air?

The royal blood of Heaven's in my veins,  
Which flows so burned in anguish but  
still proud,

By no means humbled by calamity.

I'll crack the ear of earth's buffoonery,  
Whose topmost lobe hangs there on Cal-  
vary.

Sound on, ye hymns of peace, ye songs of  
praise,

Within your woodland vales or cities  
clinging

Onto the mountain sides, where merriment  
And love feast on the amorous lips of women.  
Sing on in innocence or revelry—  
Yet not forever so—above this cauldron,  
Poor gnomes, ye know not what doth lurk so near  
Despite the prophets of divinity  
And cunning teachers of theology.

[*Standing erect with arms outstretched*]

O damned hell-hounds! how it cheers my soul  
To wing the air among earth's erring stars!  
The fall is not too deep for all there is  
Now over me to work that land's undoing.

[*Pointing upward*]

Peace there retains her veil; despite our work  
Is Christ enthroned; within her sanctuaries  
Are murmured indolently knavish psalms  
Against us Intellectuals of Hell.

Yet is the beach of History there, whose  
shore  
Is bloody war—and what does it expect?  
Can our infinity be put to naught?  
Lie we ill-starred, seduced and unwise  
Before the substance of that pious earth?  
Be I no longer devil if the hour's  
Not come to act, and suck existence out  
Of Godly things. Ha, ha, my noble  
fiends,  
My plan suits not the Artist Jesus-Man:  
For our rebuffs shall Europe make  
amends,  
The subtlest spot for war's most fitful  
strife,  
For murky visaged griefs and gory deaths.

MOLOCH.

But those confines are quite all Chris-  
tian.

SATAN.

Think so? I warrant thee thou art de-  
ceived.

Moloch, I gave thee credit for more wis-  
dom.

Withal a Christian is a brute, has sense

Of sex, of gold, and thirst for blood ; more  
too.  
Parrots themselves could speak of Cal-  
vary ;  
Allow them thought and even dogs could  
pray ;  
A Christian's but a keener kind of  
clay.  
Now might I tell thee what I know of  
Europe,  
That perfect calm in seething armament ?  
A State's oasis of thievery,  
Its law a snarling caravan of fools  
Dragged blindly on the desert of Ambi-  
tion.  
As Nature's linked with Hell, listen my  
fiends :  
One State pursues the clouds of war and  
is  
In wakeful preparation now. How oft  
Did I rise up o' nights and watch those  
whelps  
In armor bright arrayed. O wretched  
Prussia !  
Twinkled a secret joy within my soul  
To see that gnashing in thy jaws of steel

Aping the Martian tongue. 'Twas a  
goodly sight,  
And though a snake, I smiled with glee  
knowing  
How this would pain the Entertainer's  
ears  
Around the table of Heav'nly piety.

[*Calling the throng closer to him*]

As Nature multiplies in Prussian wombs  
So does that state with its envenomed guns  
Need but the touch of our allegiance.  
A petty enterprise? Behold above,  
The graceful Deity. Fall, Jesus Christ,  
Thou Underminer of this darkened pit!  
Ye cities, counties with your Godly laws,  
Crack twixt the mighty hands of brutish  
force.

[*Long applause*]

ATTILA.

O master, how I greet thy words; how I  
Do love thy lips that droppeth murderous  
gore.

Peace phantoms fret my soul. To Chal-  
ons-plain  
Send me again, divinest Lucifer.

The world by massacre could soon be  
ended  
Or in the lees of infants' blood be  
drowned.

CHORUS OF DEVILS.

Aye, aye, let him go forth, let him go  
forth.

SATAN (*lowering his voice*).

With war come other issues delicate,  
Those frail women, diverse companions  
First used for lust then dragged in slavery.

[*Directing his words to ANTONY*]

Marc Antony, thou hast a strong passion  
For sinuous veils, this should appeal to  
thee.

To rouse them sleeping, breathing per-  
fumes in

The arts of love, 'twill be a recompense—  
Feel kisses sting like whips, feel fairer  
hands

From arms of sapphire-tendrilled veins  
dig in

Thy throat. Methinks I'll change my  
mind and now

Recall thy mummied rag of Egypt, eh?  
Verily she had wit at Actium.

ANTONY.

Forbear! to Fate and to my soul unjust.  
I care no longer for the challenge of steel,  
And less for the forbidden arts of love.  
Beauty's a precious gift, but not in hell.  
No worthy match am I in suffering;  
Less worthy would I be conceiving pain:  
If I'm debased, let that be my transgres-  
sion.

SATAN (*angrily*).

In hell thou standest in thine own estate.

[*Summoning two devils to seize him*]

Carry him down into the fields of ice.  
Passion's chaste sallies will be frozen  
there.

[*Exit ANTONY pushed roughly for-  
ward by two menials*]

NERO.

I am a matricide, thus well might urge  
That Attila be sent as he has pled.  
I hate the cross congratulating Rome  
And did my best to stamp its breeders out.

BEELZEBUB.

Fie fool, thy deeds brought fewest victims here.

Thy living torches rose in Paradise.

ATTILA (*again appealing to SATAN*).

O chief, thou spokest as Divinity.

I crave thy word to go. I'll pick and choose

Mine auguster and worthy progeny,  
The Hohenzollern pirates, for this work.

The thing needs time, that's all, and strategy.

SATAN.

Nay, time is mortals' plea. Still, thou seem'st wise.

RICHARD III (*limping up to the throne of SATAN*).

A sage is he, yon Attila, the Hun—  
He spoke of his great sweep on Chalons-field.

With thy permission, therefore, O great king,

I'll sketch a picture here of Flanders-field.

[SATAN nods assent]

[*The lights grow dimmer. Distant wailings and cries are heard as RICHARD recites*]

The silent stars droop their appealing eyes

In tears o'er shriek of fiends and anguished cries

From dying man. Into the fiery glow

Of flame and poisonous gas, the tread below

Of infantry advancing to the fight

Creates new horrors in the gory night.

Hark, comes a savage roar like dragons meet,

A gap in rank—a clash, then horses' feet

Tramp o'er the bodies of the fallen ones

While pulling, dragging up the heavy guns.

The battle now becomes confused; lurid

The air from gas and stench of blood; torrid

In fumes from cursing lips and gnashing teeth

O'er mangled arms, torn sides and limbs beneath.

The stars turn into bells that toll the dead,

Count writhing shadows in the midnight dread.

At dawn the flames become a moving mist  
Outcreeping broken arch and trees atwist.

[*Applause*]

SATAN.

Thou couldst have done no better than come here.

RICHARD III.

My memory gloats within conspiracies,  
Like yonder Cassius and Marcus Brutus.

[SATAN and MOLOCH, with RICHARD III and ATTILA, are seen conferring]

NERO (*to one side*).

I have done proudly. Minute reformers  
of

Imperial Rome, trapped are ye now.  
Cæsar,

Ye fools, does not forgive so easily.

[*In singing tones*]

White is the maid of Peace, and white  
her robe

Enwreathed with roses near the Vatican,  
Or shadowing innocence and queenly  
pride

Across the fields of Belgium and France.  
We'll rape and spoil her lap of loveliness.

BEELZEBUB (*sarcastically*).

Not without art, Nero, e'en here in Hell.

NERO (*retorting*).

O humor's base, when it doth come from  
thee.

SATAN (*calling BISMARCK from the throng*).

Bismarck, thou art more recently famili-  
iar—

Now, what hast thou to say? I stood be-  
hind

Thee in thy former war and when thou  
camest

To this infernal place, I saw thy deeds,  
Thy sanguinary work there well estab-  
lished.

BISMARCK.

Ah, mock me not, though thou art lord-  
liest.

Satan, I dream not in the thirst for blood,  
Nor zest acute, nor wish that war return.  
Though God lays on me more than I can  
bear,

Though these old hands do tremble in despair

I would not have my country thus involved.

I see thy motive and thy frightfulness.

[*Hisses*]

That Prussia is prepared for war, 'tis true—

For that alone was I responsible.

Such preparation best upholds for peace,  
Securing all the world and all mankind.

For conquests further, I will not take part,  
Though loud and fierce with blame thy hate may be.

SATAN (*with grinning malice*).

Say fool, is this thy gratitude?

BISMARCK (*calmly*).

Care I

For that. I see the circling splendor of  
My work, as I do see the ruin now  
Conjured within this evil thou wouldest hatch.

My one regret's the fact my plans did give  
To thee such scope to reek this wider carnage;

For that alone thou shouldst be very thankful.

[*Hisses*]

SATAN (*rising from the throne in supreme anger*).

Thou servile mind, what is thy chief affliction?

A man hell-stricken? Remember thou art damned.

Temper'st thine angelic reveries here?

Take holy water, cross thyself and smirk.

[*With sneering sarcasm*]

And thou they called a man of Blood and Iron.

Get chalice, bells and censers, Chancellor.

Let babies play, eh, 'stead of drowning them?

See how he frames his eyes! Who else will speak?

The giant work called Bismarck is a sham,  
The royal victory of Sedan a rout.

And yet despite these present blemishes,  
It seems no farther off than yesterday

That he and I were standing hand in hand  
Within the palace walls of fair Versailles

Drawing a contract for the ruin of man.  
Thou art a shrivelled warrior, Bismarck.  
What pity 'tis there is a thing called soul.

[*Growing excited at the apparent calmness of BISMARCK*]

O hear me out of Hell! Thou wouldest  
grow kind?

Hast claim upon Celestial Virtue? Trust  
not,

Contrarius shade—my war on Heaven  
may

Be vain, but there on earth I will be king.

[*To ATTILA*]

Attila, arm thou now; with hell-flames go  
As soon as thou hast heard my full intent.

Unbosom all our smooth hypocrisies  
Against the laws of nature and of land;

With wiles and thy resistless 'ways, O  
Hun,

Warble some charms of praise, of power,  
or then

Lest it perhaps offend some, talk of peace;  
Be double-mouthed in thy diplomacy.

I know thy traits—fain use them well;  
benumb

The reason of that Prussian dynasty.

[*Pointing sceptre at BISMARCK*]

Why so confused, Bismarck? Ill-timed  
pride  
In thy kultur and mil'taristic dream?  
Aye, worst of all, destroyed will be their  
ends.

[*Glancing maliciously towards RICHARD*]

As well the conceit of yon British swine,  
Attempered too with force and fraud or  
crime

And crazed to colonizing all the globe.

[*Addressing himself to all*]

Hear my decree, witness my domination:

[*Rising, SATAN outspreads his arms to  
appear like huge wings*]

Ye co-eternal Birds! No vulture's risen  
From out the orbits of the sky to fall  
Upon more nests of low-roofed misery.  
In conscience lies the engine of all deeds—  
In sooth there's conscience in my pedigree.  
We know the majesty of thought as well  
And feel ambition rush through every  
vein.

My conscience so aglow is out for war,

Such war as only spirits can conjure  
Within their bodiless mentality.  
But voice is prattle, action is what counts:  
So to my task of foul disfigurement.

[*Turning again to ATTILA*]

Go thou forth, Attila, all now's at stake  
In trusting this to thine ability.  
Light there the flame o'er trembling  
Christ ascendant;  
Let chaos interwolve without remorse;  
On everything that's mortal turn my  
wrath;  
Each town shall bear the imprint of thy  
hand  
And all the vales that front the falling  
sun.

Let babes be slaughtered, cathedrals  
tumbled down,

[*In low diabolical tones*]

And enter thou the sacred nunneries;  
And listen why: dost feel the virtue of  
The mazes they are unacquainted with?  
'Tis 'gainst my glory they be ignorant.  
Steal into Alpine valleys, sunset-lustered  
With tiny villages, each with its spire

And clear stream lined with lilies musical  
Where azure children bathe in merriment.

Wave me down progress of thy deeds done there.

[*Short pauze*]

Rape mothers, daughters, all, beneath the moon:

[*Looking upward and at the same time making an encircling gesture with his forefinger*]

O withered dowager! thou'll drip down blood

Indeed when earth is made thy paramour.  
Say, my Peers, it will be the rarest sport.  
Both lust and thievery shall vie with me  
In loathsome rays of beastly force and crime.

[*Bidding them all disperse*]

Go all of you apart.

[*Glancing upward again*]

Thou, Christ, doth fawn  
From fear, and cause Thou hast indeed.  
Come, come!

Rise Massacre! rise Passion, Madness,  
Fury!

And go thou, Attila, I bid thee fly,  
Though there thou'l be in my society.

ATTILA.

I'll do the business, King, and Heaven  
will gaze

In wonder at. Surely I've stayed too  
long

In this Stygian pit. To Chalons-plain!

But first to Potsdam veiled in infamy

I'll sow thy glozing seeds of butchery.

[*Amid sudden flashes of lightning and  
rolling thunder ATTILA rushes to-  
wards the opening. The throngs  
follow him in great confusion, some  
uttering cries in rage against, while  
others seem to acclaim the mission.  
SATAN from his throne watches the  
scene intently for a moment, then  
slowly rolls back his huge eyes into a  
fixed expression of malice and satis-  
faction]*]

CURTAIN

## **SCENES II AND III**



## *SCENE II*

*A small dimly lighted study in the Imperial Palace  
of Potsdam.*

*It is night.*

*Panoplies of armor reminiscent of the middle ages  
glimmer on the walls.*

*There is a small door to the left at back. Adjacent  
to this is distinguished a bust of Napoleon resting  
on a pedestal. The curtain rising, the "All-Highest"  
is discovered in full military uniform sitting in  
front of his desk. Resting on his elbows with head  
between his hands he is vainly endeavoring to keep  
awake.*

THE "ALL-HIGHEST" (*moving his withered  
arm and gazing at the wall*).

Ah, why was I so eminently reared  
In this creation to stare at rusting armor  
And moldering escutcheons? Useless  
Are all my regiments of burnished steel.  
The creed proclaimed that I with God  
should rule

In formulæ far wider than His own.  
Why then is greatness so abstemious?

[*Glancing at the bust of NAPOLEON*]

And thou, Conquest, for centuries enthroned

Among the consecrated gods, thinned thus  
By fasting to a skeleton? 'Tis strange.  
What sudden wrath could change this angel child

Of peace, this trifle in the universe?

Can gods learn anything except from God?

Am I commended to diplomacy?

Reluctantly I've grown to be its kin—  
Accursed or blessed be mine effigies.

[*Rubbing his eyes*]

My soul is sick of this blank era, weary.  
Midnight, thou art a solemn hour indeed,  
Sole heir to all the virtues of the day.

[*Drowsily*]

O sleep! how often we dispute thy coming,

Yet full of thousand sweets—ah—ah—

[*Falls sound asleep*]

[*For a moment the stage is dark*]

### *SCENE III*

(Same as Scene II)

[*A vivid flash of lightning. Enter suddenly ATTILA with eyes ablaze. He is bedecked with helmet and armor and bearing a large sword*]

THE “ALL-HIGHEST” (*leaning far back in his chair and staring wildly at the intruder*).

Who—who art thou?

ATTILA (*coming closer and grimly leaning forward on his sword*).

Be of good courage, sir,  
I’m not an owl-eyed ghost.

THE “ALL-HIGHEST.”

Who art thou? Say!

ATTILA (*smiling*).

By providential arts I’ve come to thee  
To rouse the feeble—

THE “ALL-HIGHEST.”

Thy name, illusion?  
Whence comest thou?

ATTILA (*calmly*).

Of course from my frontier.

[*Glaring into his face*]

My progeny, canst thou not recognize  
The Scourge of God? Behold me, Attila!

THE "ALL-HIGHEST" (*excitedly*).

Madman! Or am I mad? Go get thee  
hence!

ATTILA.

I pray thee listen—

THE "ALL-HIGHEST."

Away, I say, away!

ATTILA.

Who rules the universe but those of  
strength?

I was dispatched for thy offense and good.

THE "ALL-HIGHEST" (*more calmly*).

These must be dreamy phantoms, yet I  
feel

There's blood still coursing in my frozen  
veins.

What arts and curious shifts does mind  
devise?

Oh it is little to be born a man

If brain must so become the jest of demons.

ATTILA (*philosophically*).

The shade of mind is that which makes the man;

Its hue is dark or bright as he doth think.  
The adverse gods will seize the brooding soul

And magnify each apprehension.

As Fortune drifts to happy attitudes,  
The swifter will it rush to mighty deeds.

THE "ALL-HIGHEST."

Aye, aye, I see; but how camest thou here?

ATTILA.

My friend, had I not *might* which gave me *right*?

THE "ALL-HIGHEST."

No matter who thou art, that dogma's sound.

ATTILA.

The law's infirm and liberty's decayed:  
A fight is wiser than a host of words.

THE "ALL-HIGHEST."

Indeed I'll say thou art a judge of truth.

ATTILA (*familiarly*).

Here I foresaw thy thoughts before I came.

Aren't we a race supreme in ancient wars?

THE "ALL-HIGHEST."

That's true in part but Attila's not "we."

ATTILA.

I swear that I am loth to leave thy side.

[*With enthusiasm*]

Could we not build scenes on our great desires?

To each fine impulse give some entity  
Beyond the limits of this slothful age?

THE "ALL-HIGHEST."

Not without war—Prussia is civilized.

ATTILA.

Pardon thou art mistaken Emperor.

To my rough soul so lately scarred with fire

'Twas prophesied that thou wouldst be a god,

A War-Lord greater than the world has known.

THE "ALL-HIGHEST."

Wouldst thou tempt me with false presentiments?

ATTILA.

Thou'st known the spirits of each glorious age?

[*Glancing toward the bust of NAPOLEON*]

See! there is he upon that pedestal  
Whom Nature hangs in Heaven as a god.

THE "ALL-HIGHEST" (*with a smile*).

I never heard 'til now that he was there.

ATTILA.

The readiest way to heaven is by force.

THE "ALL-HIGHEST."

Thou soundest like a lion out of Hell.

ATTILA.

The hour of every great man's hope is war;

To fight, then be immortal like myself.

THE "ALL-HIGHEST" (*sarcastically*).

And him they sent down to St. Helena.

ATTILA.

Above our stars, now why not be the sun?

[*To himself, looking towards the bust with admiration, then glancing with contempt toward his companion*]

The life of nobler ages hath decreed  
A fame for him that thou shalt never  
hold.

THE "ALL-HIGHEST."

That was a sad reverse. I never would  
Surrender myself to an enemy.  
With unsuspected secrecy I'd fly  
And vanish straight into a neutral state.

ATTILA.

Here's gold for such a journey—buy a  
mule!

THE "ALL-HIGHEST."

I do not feel as angry as I should.

ATTILA.

Why sit here like some slow-eyed whining  
Moor?

Wilt thou not grasp thine opportunity?  
Or dost prefer to preach laments of peace  
Rhymed out in verses of diplomacy?

O see thy Prussian eagles! witched and  
tamed.

Above a string of asses braying Hague  
Tribunals, Treaties, International Laws.

THE "ALL-HIGHEST."

My peoples, they enjoy the reign of peace.

ATTILA.

As blood is lent by nature, so is fire  
To raise the tides of our enthusiasm.  
Successful motives change the people's  
hearts,  
And all fair thinking knows Ambition  
well  
Can snub the title of equality.  
I understood that thou wast valiant.

THE "ALL-HIGHEST."

I am no coward.

ATTILA.

But still thou art not great.

THE "ALL-HIGHEST."

I do believe I could be.

ATTILA.

Aye, thou couldst.

[*Impatiently*]

Get thee a cudgel and away with words;  
Make all a desolation but thy state.

THE “ALL-HIGHEST.”

But how? My first real doubt is this,—  
but how?

ATTILA (*in tones of coarse familiarity*).

Say brother, France has been kicked once,  
*n'est ce pas?*

THE “ALL-HIGHEST.”

But my friend England is allied to her;  
My mother is an English woman, too.

ATTILA.

Chief of the gods, why art thou pleased  
to jest?

Be wise and cast thy British blood like  
this.

[*Strikes his nose until it bleeds*]

Wouldst thou be great and speak such  
sentiments?

Take my advice, put softnesses away;  
Those things avail but they are not for  
Huns.

Go out and trample, rape, corrupt, and  
kill—

That is no sudden change of policy.

Come to the point again—thine army is  
Prepared I know; thou hadst discretion  
there

And keen insight. If thou canst rule the  
world,

Then falls the firmament at thy com-  
mand;

Thou'l be a counter-glory of the sun,  
See yonder sack of stars bow down to thee  
And turn to bloody rubies in thy path.

How easy this—yet thou didst need my  
soul

To think in iron and dream in cannons'  
roar.

#### 'THE "ALL-HIGHEST" (*offended*).

Nay, nay, thou dost misjudge me, Attila;  
I've always been wrought to this very  
mood.

Deny thou that—then why didst thou  
come here?

The earth ailed first because I was not  
born

And Time turned only great when I arrived.

'Tis true that I'm anointed of the Lord  
As thou hast said. 'Twas fated from the first.

ATTILA.

Aye, aye, draw swords and flash the fangs  
of Hell.

Conventions, laws, thrice spit upon them all!

THE "ALL-HIGHEST" (*becoming enthusiastic*).  
That should be practised—thou art truly wise.

Ah, there're no damned shades that ever lived

That will not call on me. Is it not so?  
Thy progeny's a fiercer Hun than thou,  
The mailéd fist is mightier than the Scourge.

ATTILA (*slyly*).

I do protest against comparisons.  
Abide 'til we draw thither, what thou art:  
Then we'll establish our confederacy.

[*To himself*]

To dream myself into a shape like him—  
'Tis entertainment for a meaner eye.

[*Loudly*]

Strike France and Russia simultaneously,  
Ere help come in from England to re-  
lieve:

That is the main stake of my plan just  
now.

#### THE "ALL-HIGHEST."

But I would strike the weak primarily,  
For then we stab at wombs, which bear  
the strong.

The French frontier forts are impregna-  
ble,

Swarming with troops expectant of attack.

ATTILA (*suddenly raising his sword and in  
tones of contempt and satisfaction*).

My Scourge is thine! Thou art the viler  
Hun.

#### THE "ALL-HIGHEST."

Where lies the error? Strike through  
Belgium!

[*There is a roll of thunder and flare of*

*lightning followed by total darkness. Suddenly, recognized by his toga and Imperial wreath, the figure of JULIUS CÆSAR is discovered standing erect in the doorway. He slowly unfolds a parchment on which is drawn a map of Gaul.*

[*Looking toward the "ALL-HIGHEST" and ATTILA with expressions of mingled pain, contempt, and anger, he passes his right forefinger over the parchment*]

JULIUS CÆSAR (*resting his finger at one point on the map*).

The Belgians are the bravest of all Gaul!

[*The light goes out and the vision vanishes. Stage totally dark*]

VOICE OF ATTILA.

To Chalons-plain!

VOICE OF THE "ALL-HIGHEST."

Aye, and to Paris! Come!

CURTAIN

## **SCENE IV**



## *SCENE IV*

*Late in the afternoon. A battle-field in Flanders within the German lines.*

*The curtain rising discloses rows of trenches in the outermost background, whence come cries and the roaring of artillery. Flames every now and then are seen to spurt up in the distance. To the left at back stands a field hospital towards which streams of wounded are being carried or borne on stretchers. In the foreground General von Hofen and Captain Harrach are discovered with other members of the staff. Some of the officers are standing while others are sitting about a large table littered with steins and bottles, papers, maps, telephones, and various military paraphernalia. An orderly stands by filling the General's glass and those of the other officers.*

[*Enter LIEUT. HORST. He salutes VON HOFEN*]

VON HOFEN (*to HORST*).

Well?

HORST.

The English are pressing our right wing and their artillery is well sheltered.

## VON HOFEN.

Camouflaged, eh? Ten thousand thunders! Where are our reserves? [Turning to HARRACH]. Now Harrach, don't look so squeamish. Yonder gutless dogs will never send me to Kingdom Come with gazetted heroism and Yankee bullets. [*The officers clap their hands, raise their steins and laugh vociferously*]. I will salute a Frenchman; if the day is hot I might even drink with a Zouave. We must admit that Foch at Ypres was a fighter; but never these British swine

HARRACH (*half-intoxicated and peering toward the distant firing line*).

Ach! that was a great charge. God save the white-livered English now. They find our Uhlans, war-horses clothed in thunder.

## VON HOFEN.

Dust, smoke, shells, gas and fire—hell's breath—I'm sure there will be plenty of bleeding rags in the hospital tonight. Come, let us drink while slaugh-

ter runs in the warring winds. By the shade of Attila! we are done with sugarsticks for swords, with teatime rules against barbarism and all such tomfoolery that brings housewifery on the battlefield and makes weaklings out of our goose-stepping regiments. [*Laughter*]. Cold-blooded killing is what counts; anything else offends the devil. Make the hair of the enemy shiver and shrink at its roots. Drink "To the Day." Drink to war! To war that's life and butchery that's soul.

[*Applause*]

HARRACH.

Shoot 'em down — that's government.

[*Applause*]

VON HOFEN (*banging his fist on the table*).

Aye, Harrach! What the plague do we fight for? On to Paris! I'll give one hundred marks to the keen-eyed gunner who fells the first statue, Christ, Virgin, or saint off the façade of Notre Dame.

[*Applause*]

HARRACH.

Feed the flames! care not what they burn!

HORST (*to VON HOFEN*).

But my orders, General? There's another force to westward.

VON HOFEN (*with eyes bleared and handing him a telegram*).

What? Take this to the ranking officer of the Third Corps. By the time you arrive the English will be in retreat. [*Applause*]. But understand, I disapprove of rural landscapes. Burn out every murmuring stream; destroy all villages and every flowery vale that give any alarm of habitation. I will not tolerate any fawning or snuffing population ready to spring on my back at the first delightsome moment. Any dove-breasted virgins I leave to his own discretion; but after that presumptuous affair of the Bishop of Malines, if he chance upon any pray-bellying priests, let me have the pleasure of hearing them chant a few litanies in this camp. A score of these sots disembowelled on the steps of their altar would be better show than a bull fight.

[*Laughter and applause*]

[*Exit HORST*]

[*They sing "Deutschland Uber Alles"*]

[*Sudden increase in the din of battle*]

[*Exunt hurriedly all but VON HOFEN  
and HARRACH*]

VON HOFEN (*looking through his field glass  
toward the trenches*).

Shivery shaky shots, Mein Gott! What's the matter with our barrage? [*For a few seconds he scans the horizon concernedly and intently through his glasses*]. Ach, that's better! The swine are retreating again. [*Lowers field glass*]

HARRACH (*to VON HOFEN in undertones*).

Soft, sir, a word with you. There's a girl-house, I mean a nunnery in the nearby village.

VON HOFEN (*laughing and nudging HARRACH with his elbow*).

Well then, you can leave at once on furlough. [*Nudging him again*]. Shall we train our guns on it afterwards? Remember, always thorough, Harrach.

HARRACH.

They fly the Red Cross flag.

VON HOFEN.

That's a good mark. But speaking of tangled tresses—how about that Brussels hospital nurse we captured in the last town honored by our goose-step-pers?

HARRACH.

She's most solicitous of the wounded—a comely woman, and I am quite enamoured with her. But she scorns all advances—hence my love and hate are becoming balanced on the scales.

VON HOFEN.

She's English, Harrach. A pox on these slander-mouthing English. They carry enough poison on their tongues to corrupt truth itself.

HARRACH (*laughing*).

I professed a friendship for her, that was all.

VON HOFEN.

Friendship is a dried fig, and what's more,

as sure a forerunner to love as yonder battle is to the coming rattle of our steins in the Cafe de Paris; 'twill be before All Saints Day. [Turning to FIRST ORDERLY and pointing towards the hospital]. Fetch Miss —— what's her name, Harrach?

HARRACH (*disconcertedly*).

Edith Vernon.

[Exit FIRST ORDERLY, saluting]

VON HOFEN.

Don't look melancholy. I wouldn't coo in the same cage with your Anglo-Saxon canary, but she must drink a glass of Rhenish wine with me. Always thorough, you know, always thorough.

[Enter SECOND ORDERLY]

ORDERLY (*to VON HOFEN*).

I have an English prisoner, an officer. I caught him lurking near a distant trench.

VON HOFEN.

Officer, you say? A gallant Britisher?  
Bring the man here. [Turning to

HARRACH *and imitating the English*]. Egad! He's a slim featureless ass, I'll bet.

ORDERLY.

I have him blindfolded, sir, and guarded in a shell hole off the road.

VON HOFEN.

Good! go fetch him here.

[*Exit SECOND ORDERLY, saluting*]

[*To HARRACH*]

Don't mistake me, Harrach. As God made the sun the biggest pimple in the sky, He made no greater scandal in rags than a woman. Fortune takes the weaker sex under her protection, but Kultur must lead it now out of that monotony. As for your nurse, I could be charmed with Cleopatra's art without falling in love with her face. However, if you are becoming an amorous puppy, I repeat: here's your furlough. Go get you to the nunnery. My own affair is war at present—that despite the fact that my way of making it seems to disappoint the blessings of Provi-

dence. Our talk is reduced to this,— shall we die heroes or live Germans? [HARRACH *proffers him another glass of beer*]. For myself, I'd rather feed on garbage behind yonder trenches than eat the sweetest meats in some flower-fringed paradise, even be those meats fed me from the fingers of all the conjuring angels. [*Raising his glass*]. No, I'm not afraid of death either. Here's to the Fatherland! Our Emperor says, “'Tis well—God rules and thus—I rule.”

[Enter SECOND ORDERLY leading prisoner blindfolded]

VON HOFEN.

Unbandage his eyes and let me see this man.

[The ORDERLY removes the bandage roughly]

[SIR JOHN STEELE is discovered]

HARRACH.

Of all the rogues these English are the worst.

SIR JOHN (*to VON HOFEN*).

I understand, sir, you're the General.

VON HOFEN.

You understand correctly, I am he.

[*Walking closer, breast out, and curling his mustache*]

Where is your main force? Out now, out with it.

We're here to teach you Kultur, Britisher.

Gott! English manners are intolerable.

SIR JOHN (*placing hand on left shoulder*).

Cannot you see I'm wounded, General?

VON HOFEN (*to HARRACH*).

Give him a drink, Harrach — your pardon, sir.

Our business though is war. Where is that force?

'Tis blissful to be brief — now answer me.

SIR JOHN.

I am so dazed, I really do not know.

VON HOFEN (*to the SECOND ORDERLY*).

Then search him. You know we must be thorough, eh?

War is a business when it's for the world.  
Think what destruction means to us—

SIR JOHN (*suddenly and fiercely interrupting VON HOFEN*).

Your business war? O God I wish it were.  
I love the full tide gushes of real war,  
Of bravest men faring as they should fare  
'Gainst burnished steel and anger gratified.

But what is this, your war today, I ask?  
I am your prisoner, men, but pardon me.  
'Tis not great armies meeting in the clash  
And frenzy of heroic single battle,  
Where bravery was the master of the day  
And valor was the victor on the field.

Your war is on the sanctuaries, upon  
The emblems of the silent centuries,  
On venerated age, on dear-loved homes  
Where little children bask in innocence.  
No pagan star e'er shone upon such deeds  
As you invoke to guide the chance of fight.

HARRACH.

Silence this man!

VON HOFEN.

No, let him babble on.

SIR JOHN.

This war's the flower of the Christian race  
Torn, withered, hungry, starving, bleeding,  
ing,—aye,

Up to its knees in icy water. This war  
Confines its pleasures to the dark; eyes  
used

[*Pointing upward, then downward*]

From zeppelins o'erhead, from periscopes  
Beneath the sea, havoc upon the souls  
Who strive to give your wounded succor.

O men,

Are you not officers,—each with your  
homes?

In righting wrong must you needs wrong  
the right?

Avenging strength must you attack the  
weak?

Did Blücher fight such course to Waterloo?

In his quick march across fair Flanders-  
field

Did such afflictions mar her fertile plains?

Did Bismarck war upon bereaved women,  
Outrage the nunneries and sacred priests?

Did your great Frederick or his legionaries

Tear down the shrines of God's antiquity?

VON HOFEN.

Herrgottskrament! Our good beer has made you an orator, my fellow. Modern war does not recognize authorities. What's to come? Were Gaul not being invaded by greater ones than Julius Cæsar, I would recall Antony to invoke all the hymns and blasphemies of the vengeful gods. The truth on it is this: since we are outlaws to any congenital mixture of knight-errantry and decaying law-breeders, I will face the progeny of all these maledictions myself. Moreover, your comparisons are very poor. They can all be laid flat by breaking into a cellar of good wine or charging among the drones of these fair village virgins. The first rule in our receipt book is, "Necessity knows no law." Pish! you sneer? Well, we're here to desecrate, to rend Gothic shrines; fire prostrate altars, sacred pic-

tures and crucifixes; cut the throats of children and the aged: with such methods alone can we strike a degenerate people to its knees and end this carnage. In other words, rape, betray, destroy, appal, and kill! Am I plain? Are we thorough? One does not know how or what to believe in, so the safest thing to do is to believe in nothing but force. Reputation based on anything else is cowardice. So you've wasted your breath, Englishman — wasted your breath. However, considering your wounded shoulder, and out of respect for that fiery speech, I will parole you until evening. Come into my tent, sir. Any further odds we will adjust there. An enemy's kindness frequently exceeds a friend's. Besides I am always thorough, always thorough.

[*Exit VON HOFEN and SIR JOHN*]

[*EDITH is discovered approaching. She is garbed in nurse's costume*]

HARRACH.

She comes! Ah, could she be decoyed from here

And yield consent to my great passion?  
I'll try to win her through some strata-  
gem.

[Enter the nurse, EDITH VERNON]

EDITH (*to HARRACH*).

Von Hofen sent for me?

HARRACH.

He's not here now.

EDITH.

Then I'll return to my poor suffering  
men.

[*Sudden increase in the roar of battle.*  
*Flames spurt up along the trench*  
*line*]

O God! how canst Thou look upon this  
chaos

Where works the will of hell's tyrannous  
fiend?

Downtrodden and forsaken seems the  
world,

Indeed, from Thine Eternal Spirit lost.  
My young life yet may fill some fatal part  
In high allegiance or in sacrifice.

[*Looking towards the hospital*]

The hospital there writhes beneath a pall;  
Most frightful agonies Ambition sows  
To fashion out its vile supremacy.  
Hear them! tho' speech is much less terrible  
"Twixt these few feet and the reality.  
"O God, water, water!" "My brow, my head!"  
"Mine arms hang loose—I'm crushed."  
And then 'tis horrible their cries—waving  
Their mangled hands and bloody wrists,  
—poor half-  
Grown boys just torn from school. "I thirst." "I'm blind."  
"Mother!" "Curse all this!" "I am going West!"  
Then, "Nurse, for God's sake put an end to me!"

HARRACH.

Fraulein, why waste your passion on such things

While I am tangled in your loveliness?

EDITH (*with a frown*).

Please tell the General I'll return later.

HARRACH.

Your beauty rivals all the stars. Stay — stay!

EDITH.

Talk less of stars and note your manners, sir.

'Tis duty I obey and not you, Captain.

HARRACH.

In any case you might talk to me, dear.  
War is my dawn but you are my sunrise.

EDITH.

Pray have at least the grace of silence.

HARRACH.

Ach,

Be patient, gentle girl, and learn of me.  
I am in love; the autumn's night is short.

EDITH (*interrupting him in ringing tones of scorn*).

How dare a Prussian mention love to me!

HARRACH.

O beauteous dazzling eyes! come, come,  
sweet lips!

[*He attempts to kiss her; she slaps him across the face*]

HARRACH.

Is it the penalty of love, my dear,  
To suffer by the hand that it would kiss?  
A stroke in jest may oft prove grave,  
Fraulein.

Wounded affections, too, may scar to hate.

EDITH.

All vilest scars are skins of Huns to me.

HARRACH.

Now for your own sake be a little wise.  
The blessed spirits aren't so mad in  
Heaven

That you should spurn a Prussian officer.

[*Tenderly*]

Why choke my sighs? Have you no hu-  
man heart?

What meanings haunt the depths of those  
sweet eyes,

Their drooping lashes and their angry  
dews?

Away with corpses, bandages, and  
shrouds—

Come with me, Edith dear, come, leave  
this place.

EDITH.

Silence! you fool, you clown, you scuttling spider!

HARRACH (*becoming angry*).

'Tis not good sense you chide me so. I could

Forget and expose here the crafty methods  
That you've for weeks employed in secret—known

To none but me—this aiding prisoners  
to

Escape our lines. Now your eyes glare  
indeed.

[*Patronizingly*]

No, you're my own beloved. O come to  
me.

EDITH (*aside*).

My God, that I'm alone in such a camp!

HARRACH (*becoming angry and threatening her again*).

Know for your country it is sweet to die?

Better the briefest dreams, my sweet, than  
all

Eternal promises. Give me those lips

With love between the rims; cling to each  
other

In luscious touch until each breath turns  
flame.

[SIR JOHN is seen approaching]

Your form is streaming light,—a kiss, a  
kiss!

[He seizes and kisses her. She strug-  
gles]

[Enter SIR JOHN who rushes up and  
throws HARRACH aside. EDITH and  
SIR JOHN recognize each other]

EDITH (*rushing into his arms*).

O John! how came you here? Quick, tell  
it me.

SIR JOHN.

A prisoner.

EDITH.

Oh, that is terrible!

Yet we may find some door of hope to-  
gether.

SIR JOHN.

My darling, tell me, are you nursing  
here?

Alas, are you also held prisoner?

HARRACH.

Break off this English blasphemy.  
Enough!

You, man, have struck a Prussian officer.  
As for that fairy-face—leave her to me.

[*To himself*]

Better her lovely form be shattered now  
Than any other man should look upon it.

[*Insultingly*]

Hail, nurse! throw off your drapery.

SIR JOHN (*loudly and shaking fist in HARRACH'S face*).

You dog!

[*Enter VON HOFEN*]

VON HOFEN.

Now what's this rumpus here? Harrach, why these shadowy faces conjuring and frowning in the realm of my command? [*Looking towards SIR JOHN*]. No defiance, now, my Englishman. I would be very sorry, very sorry indeed, to have to shoot you.

SIR JOHN.

I must protect a woman, sir.

EDITH (*calmly*).

Ill deeds  
Make fair ones shine. That man insulted  
me.

Your prisoner, who is an old dear friend,  
Protected me from him and that was all.

VON HOFEN (*to EDITH*).

You have attractive graces, I'll admit.

[*To SIR JOHN*]

Islander, you've respect for your parole?

SIR JOHN.

Aye, sir, but I respect our women more.

VON HOFEN.

Bah! I want no arguments. Great warriors have a privilege with women, though the sex weakens the joints of armies. Harrach, take your honey-sipping butterfly! The second rule in our receipt book is, "All's fair in love and war." Be thorough, Harrach, always thorough.

[*Exit VON HOFEN*]

HARRACH (*seizing EDITH by the wrist*).

There is no gift that is too poor to give

If love be in the offering. Is that  
Not so?

[*EDITH snatches her arm away, moves quickly towards SIR JOHN, HARRACH following her*]

SIR JOHN.

Now keep your hands from her, I say.

HARRACH (*to SIR JOHN*).

These are the fights of blood, of rage and passion.

[*To EDITH*]

I advise you now to come, my dolly. No?  
How many prisoners have you let escape?  
There is a penalty called death for that.

SIR JOHN (*startled*).

What does he mean, Edith?

HARRACH (*scornfully*).

She is a spy.

SIR JOHN (*furiously*).

You wolf, you hound, you Hun upsprung  
from Hell,

You crime-begetter drenched in women's  
blood,

Withdraw those words!

HARRACH (*with a sneer*).

Aren't you an Englishman?

[*Rushes to the table, picks up a sword and hands it to SIR JOHN*]

Now cross swords with me. In guard!

By the Scourge

Of Attila, Britisher, you're to die.

EDITH.

O it's my fault! I cannot—dare not look.

SIR JOHN (*as they parry and fight*).

You love the blood hue? Teach us Kul-tur? ha!

The world and nothing more? Come on, you fool!

Step back, step back vice, crime, per-versity!

What now, a hit? Not much—again in guard!

HARRACH.

Your Red Cross minx will be my bride tonight.

SIR JOHN.

Your kind should taste my boot and not good steel.

[*With a vicious thrust*]

In Hell, you'll tie some marriage-knot—  
[*stabs him*] ha, there!

[*HARRACH falls as VON HOFEN rushes in with a number of officers and other men*]

VON HOFEN (*roaring*).

Order here! order, attention! [*Glaring at EDITH and SIR JOHN*]. Seize that man and woman! Ten thousand Satans! Are you wounded, Harrach? [*To SIR JOHN*]. Hang it in the clouds, you'll be shot for this.

EDITH.

O General!

VON HOFEN (*to EDITH*).

Hold your profane tongue! [*Shaking his finger at her*]. Wench of love and lust! This comes of having petticoats prattle-prattling into men's affairs. The best kissing lips in the universe are not worth a drop of Prussian blood.

[*HARRACH with the aid of an ORDERLY raises himself feebly and addresses VON HOFEN*]

HARRACH.

Friend Karl, I'm done for: yet remember  
this

As I now leave these fields of victory—

[*Pointing to EDITH*]

Your judgment passed on them is more  
than true.

The frailest stem hath strength to push  
through stones,

The sweetest rose has oft the sharpest  
thorns;

All women come from Satan's flattering  
brood.

That sex is born deceitful, aye, opaque  
In nature and in soul. 'Tis past conjecture,

These winsome shapes should rule man's  
destiny.

[*Voice becomes weaker but he still  
points at EDITH*]

I was partial to her, despite my duty.

'Twas a foolish passion in the midst of  
war,

But still was she deserving of aught else?

Can you suppose she's nursing mangled  
limbs

Save in pretending trust? I speak the truth.

She is a spy! I've known it long. She's aided

Some hundred prisoners to escape our lines.

The record of it all is in my tent.

Upon mine honor that led to this quarrel.

[*Leaning heavily on the arm of an ORDERLY sinks to the ground*]

May Hell's infernal rivers burn the British!

Farewell, my friend! I bid you all farewell!

Urge the necessity of blood and iron,  
And sign another armistice at Versailles.

The earth is half won—"To the day!"  
"The day!"

The sun is dark'ning! Fatherland! Salute!

[*Dies*]

[*VON HOFEN and the others bare their heads*]

VON HOFEN.

There lies a noble partner to our glory,  
a soldier whom the All-Seer is now

proudly welcoming. Come men! Give him a befitting burial. I will attend, too.

[*Exeunt ORDERLIES bearing body of HARRACH on a stretcher*]

[*VON HOFEN turns roughly to EDITH and SIR JOHN, at the same time beckoning soldiers*]

Hold one moment! Dispatch that pair to Brussels for trial—the man on a charge of murder, the woman as a spy. [*The hands of both EDITH and SIR JOHN are roughly bound behind their backs. VON HOFEN walks closer to EDITH with a malicious grin on his face*]. The penalties are much the same, you know. Yes, you'll be tickled then my little hell-cat. Do you understand the mathematics of our law? Life is a slippery thing, eh? Chaplain in the adventure—prattle maxims—kiss Crucifix—mystery grows—begin to feel supernatural and so on, ha, ha, ha!

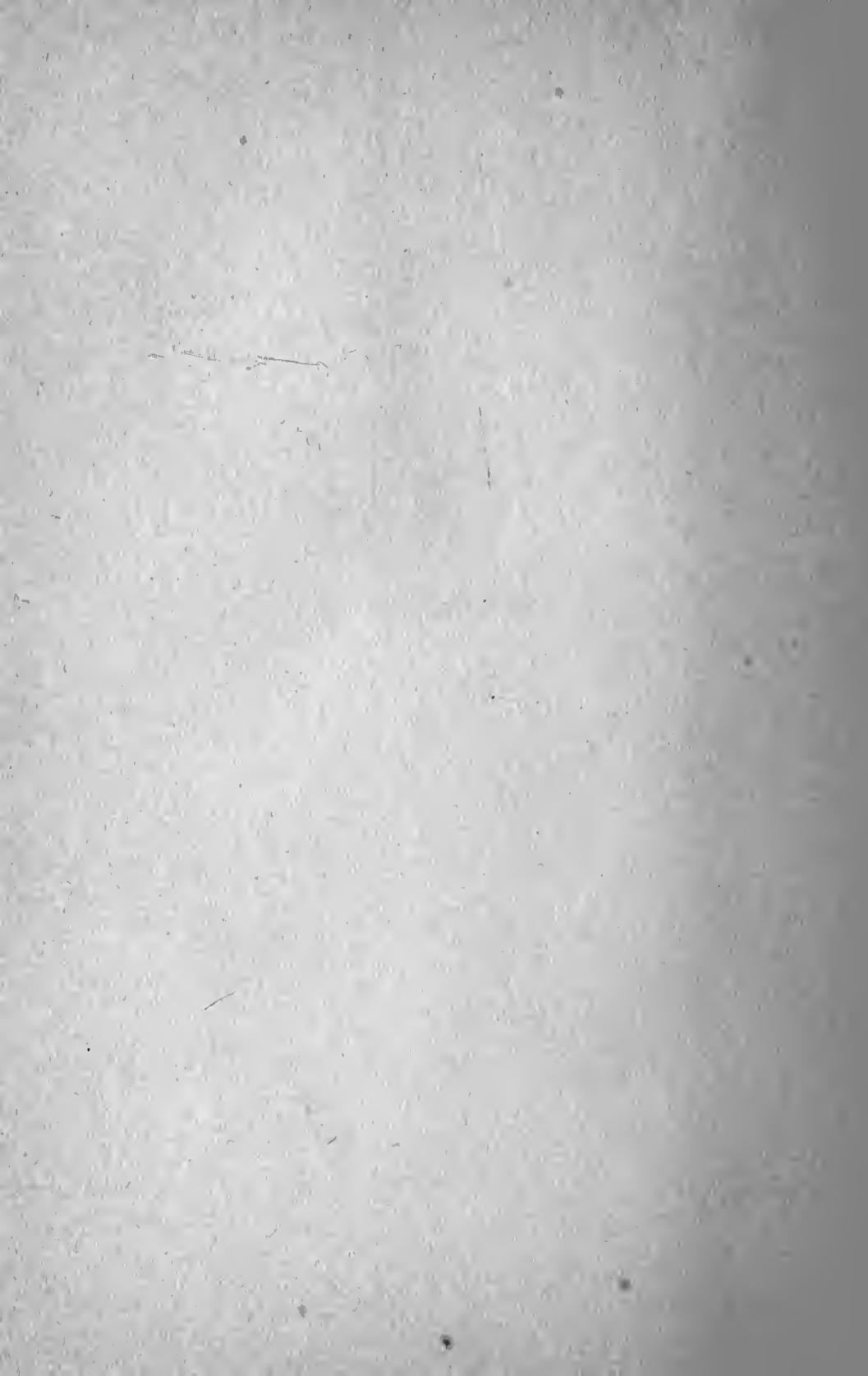
EDITH (*angrily*).  
O you fiend!

VON HOFEN (*continuing his insulting tone*).

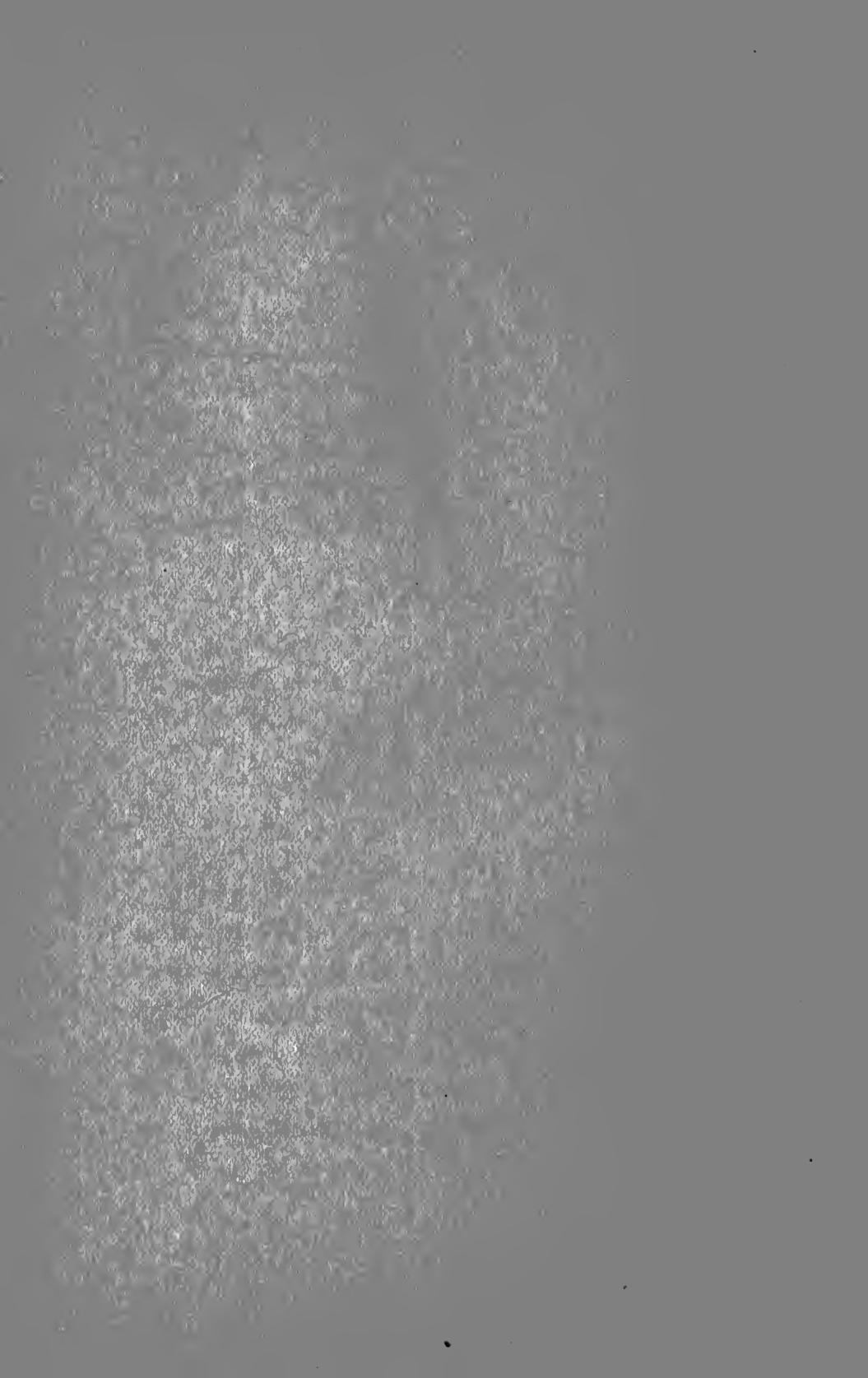
Nay, wait a while. Ruddier fruit I never dreamed could bear anger on Cleopatra's brow. But I'm not tempted, nor would I be Marc Antony cushioned between those heaving breasts. There's more to win in Paris and across your Channel. [*Glancing towards SIR JOHN, who is seen fiercely endeavoring to break from his guard*]. We're not monsters nor Cupid-killers, but—ahem—merely thorough, very thorough, always thorough.

[*Exeunt guards with EDITH and SIR JOHN followed by VON HOFEN*]

CURTAIN



## **SCENE V**



## *SCENE V*

*Brussels, Belgium. Late in the evening. Official quarters in the residence of Baron Freiderick von der Achen. A sombre but brightly lighted room. The walls are covered with maps, plans of recent campaigns, etc., while from the ceiling hang multi-colored captured flags. The curtain rising, the Baron is discovered seated at his desk, adjusting volumes, letters, and telegrams.*

[Enter an AIDE, saluting]

AIDE.

Excellency, the Spanish and American Ministers are present and must see you on important business.

VON DER ACHEM.

Show them in.

[Exit AIDE]

These diplomats are pests. Would that we were at war with all the world, thus not have to mouth off phrases of false friendship into the ears of lukewarm neutrality. I know they've come about that English woman. It would be a fig

of a fortune, indeed, if we could escape  
the fox-moves of these neutral states.

Lusitania? Horrors, consternation!  
Shells shipped to disembowel a whole  
nation? Dollars, cents, prevarication!

[Enter AMERICAN and SPANISH MIN-  
ISTERS. *They salute and shake hands  
with VON DER ACHEN*]

AMERICAN MINISTER.

We've come upon a mission of clemency.

[VON DER ACHEN bows and appoints  
them each to chairs near his desk]

We hear Miss Edith Vernon is con-  
demned.

VON DER ACHEN (*coldly*).

The woman and her so-called lover, 'tis  
true.

SPANISH MINISTER.

We plead for him—for her we must  
have mercy.

VON DER ACHEN (*positively*).

All phases were presented; the trial was  
just;

His Majesty could not have intervened.

I'll grant no hearing in the other's case.

AMERICAN MINISTER (*hopefully*).

She is a woman—you cannot shoot a woman.

VON DER ACHEN.

Sirs, I appreciate those sentiments,  
But there's no criminal code in all the  
world,

Least that of war, which should make  
that distinction.

In the premeditation lies the crime.

Intention being the same in man or wo-  
man,

The genius and the injury are alike:

The punishment then must also be equal.

Among our Russian prisoners many wo-  
men

We found in man's attire. Had these  
girls fallen

Would we have been accused of barbar-  
ism?

Why then in this case, sirs? She chose  
her role.

Did not she willingly expose herself  
Just as her Russian allies did in battle?

AMERICAN MINISTER.

But sir, she acted with a higher motive.  
Such action should be met with higher  
mercy.

SPANISH MINISTER.

To think else, sir, would be a cold pre-  
tense.

VON DER ACHEN (*impatiently*).

I beg your pardon, gentlemen, your par-  
don.

The welfare of the nation is prior  
To that of any individual.

In this prisoner the motives were not  
base,

They rose from patriotism—I presume  
To seal that patriotism then, with death  
In faces of the enemy there in battle  
Is neither greater fame nor less a duty  
Than sealing it with such an end as this.

[Enter BARONESS *excitedly*]

THE BARONESS.

O Fritz! Tell me about this English  
nurse.

Choose not women for the spoils of war.

She must not die! I had a dreadful dream  
Like Pontius Pilate's wife. Be merciful!

SPANISH MINISTER (*bowing to the Baroness*).  
That is our cause and what we've pled,  
Señora.

THE BARONESS.

Remorse of conscience is akin to Hell,  
By Victory, Change, or Time uncomfort-  
ed.

VON DER ACHEN (*impatiently*).

An effect of humor, dear, my wife, and  
now  
Justice cannot give ears to women's  
dreams.

THE BARONESS.

May she then see her lover before death?  
Your gracious Chaplain also pled for this.

AMERICAN MINISTER.

'Twould be a kindly favor to my State.

THE BARONESS.

And this you must do, Fritz, you will do,  
please!

[VON DER ACHEN *hesitates, goes out of*

*the room for a moment and is seen consulting with an AIDE]*

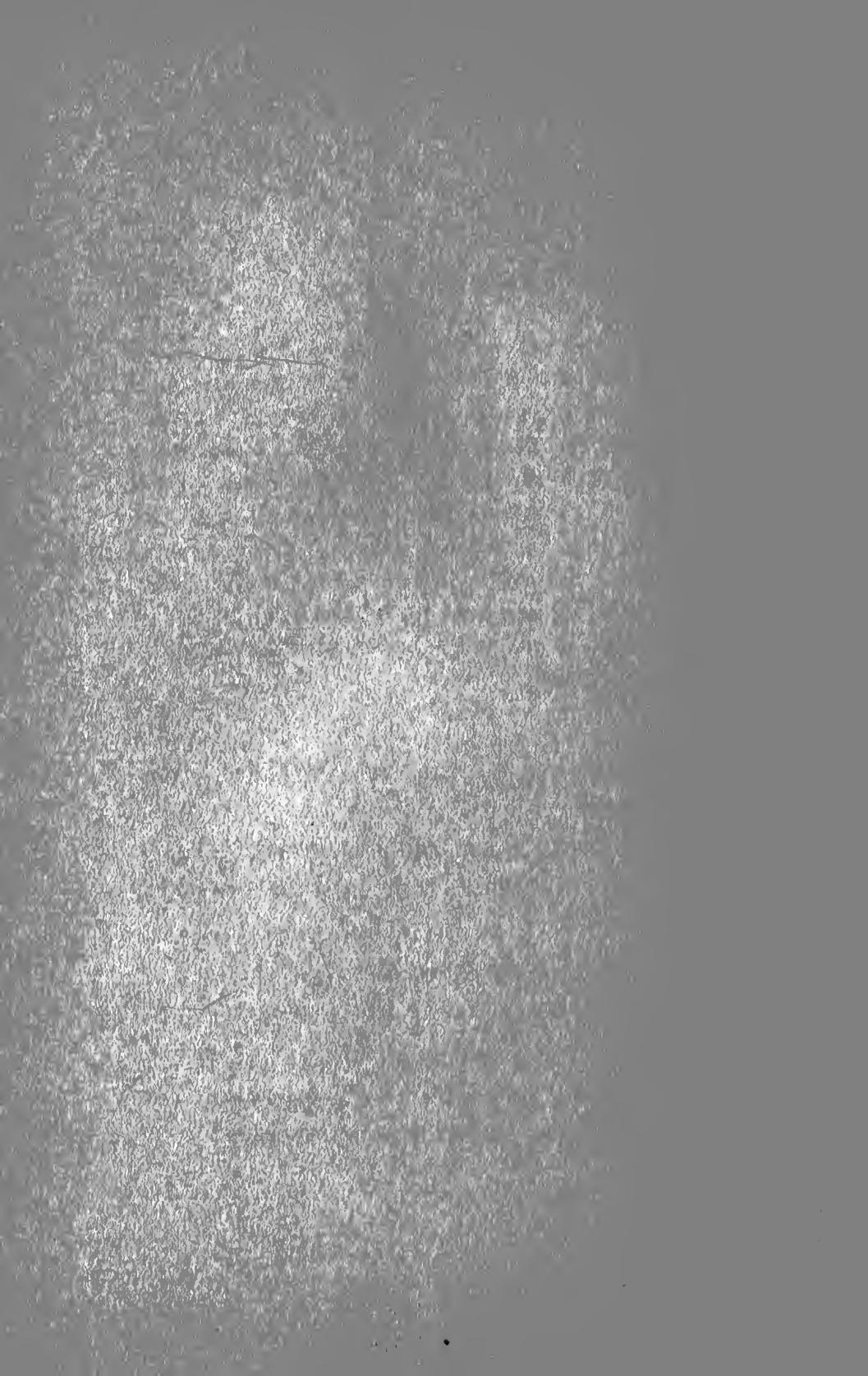
VON DER ACHEN (*reëntering*).

I'll grant it, gentlemen. But I have no jurisdiction over these sentences. The woman dies at sunrise; the man will be executed at noon.

[*The MINISTERS take their leave coldly, leaving the BARONESS and her husband alone*]

CURTAIN

## SCENES VI, VII, AND VIII



## *SCENE VI*

*Death cell in the military prison of Brussels. The door is directly in the center of the left wall. A small heavily grated window to the left at back admits the last flood-light of a waning moon, while in the distance the first frail streaks of dawn appear. In the foreground is a plain wooden table on which a feeble lamp is burning. Against the right wall is an iron bed before which as the curtain rises, Edith is discovered kneeling in prayer.*

*The tramp of the heavy prison guard is heard at regular intervals.*

EDITH.

My God, my Comforter and dear Redeemer!

I am no more mine own, my soul is Thine,  
And all its dreams are laid before Thy feet.

[*Rising softly from the side of the bed  
she glances up at the window*]

So still!

[*Clasping now one of the window bars  
she gazes intently at the stars*]

There nothing wakes as yet except  
The watchful stars. Dear little shining  
jewels  
Of God, perhaps you grieve for me. Tell  
me,  
What wealth of sorrow you've looked  
down upon.  
O watchers stung with pain! So strange  
your silence,  
Yet prudent in such evil times as these.  
And thou, fair moon, drifting in fleecy  
clouds,  
Dost weep for Edith too? O bear with  
me!  
Pour down thy tears and give my soul  
thy light.  
Tears are indeed the right of grief.  
But lo! Is this the dawn that I must  
leave?  
May I no longer breathe its sacred  
myrrh?  
No longer hear the birds—their carols  
sung  
In notes that rise in woodland cadences  
Across the ferny air and tranquil pools?  
Now comes the morn, so tenderly, so soft

Upon the quiet dawn. The dawn love-pining

Doth rise to meet the bridal rays of day.  
My life sets with the rising sun and day  
Then drops her golden mantle on my name.

[*Pacing slowly about the cell*]

Am I afraid to die? I do not know.  
Thoughts sometimes speak with words in slumber's chair  
And from their unseen lips cry out our woe.

Strange we must answer at the point of death

All those, our faults and follies, and to whom?

For whom? What hath been should be ever — that's

The account of Fate, which audits naught beyond

The brazen urn that holds his remnant figures.

Our chances run and at the worst we end.

Life has no meaning in reality;

It comes unasked and goes like heaven's air.

Condemned to die—O God, to die alone!  
No father, mother—aye, to die alone.  
In all the other paths of Nature we  
Do move in company, and yet in Death  
We tread alone. Fain doth it seem there-  
in

That Godly Nature is unnatural.

[*Approaching the table she picks up a small picture of her sister, and while looking at it intensely, commences to sob and laugh hysterically, at the same time moves backwards toward the window*]

Sister! the visions of our childhood here?  
In these dark prison walls? O Margaret!  
Tiny, Tiny, come to the playroom, dear!  
Midst toys and dolls; then read our fairy  
tales:

Sweet little joys in innocence and play.

[*More calmly*]

I then knew not this unrelenting world,  
Though drifting toward the top of steep  
rocked sorrow.

What has its mass of later years revealed?  
So unexpected, therefore sadder still;

Yet such has ever been since world was  
world.

[*Drying her eyes with her handkerchief she becomes more composed.*

*Sitting at the table she writes a letter to her mother and sister, murmuring the words as she writes them]*

Dear mother, my beloved, and Margaret:  
If ever you receive this letter you  
Will know your little Edith's then in  
Heaven,  
Across the pearléd threshold to 'Our  
Father.  
Light issues forth beneath this darkness  
rayed  
In red, while flaming arms now lift their  
dead  
To everlasting realms of Victory.

[*Pausing a moment*]

With all I have but little fear to die;  
I've touched and lived with death these  
weeks so oft  
That mine seems lesser in reality.  
Here standing, rising to a higher crown,  
All dread's removed; my sorrows pause  
beneath  
A tender sweetness for diviner things.  
Farewell, sweet Margaret! Safest is your  
home

With mother. Precious mother, be  
consoled,

In giving much you had to Freedom's  
cause.

Farewell, beloved, O sad confusion!

Why, why, have I so long a tale here writ?  
Just heed my prayers and kiss these sleep-  
less eyes.

I clasp you now in spirit, dear, my love;  
With that embrace go to Eternity.

[*She folds and seals the letter*]

'Tis finished, yet they will suffer more  
than I.

Unfair again seems Nature's hand, when  
it

Doth bring to helpless ones our sorrow,  
aye,

And chiefest hers, the heart that gave us  
life.

My soul will climb, will falter and be  
sped,

Will those with tears but pay me pity's  
debt?

[*Sorrowfully*]

Two-thirds of life the wise men say is to  
Have grieved. What am I? Was I af-  
ter all?

[*With great agitation, pressing her temples with her fingers*]

You seeing eyes, you feeling nerves, and thou

My memoried mind, how has my being changed?

Time, in advance, doth bring on misery.  
O why this fear of death within my heart  
When even in the zenith of the day  
We feel the rayless majesty of night?  
So oft the only thing worth while in life  
Is the memory of a great sorrow.

VOICE FROM WITHOUT.

My child!

EDITH.

The Chaplain's voice!

[*Enter a CHAPLAIN*]

O comforter!

For hours I've waited and prepared myself.

CHAPLAIN.

Courage, tomorrow hath no yesterday.

EDITH (*weeping*).

No, no, I have it not. O I am lost!

CHAPLAIN.

Have you not all of earth you would of,  
child?

EDITH (*drying her eyes*).

I know that I so ill deserve this fate.

CHAPLAIN.

But death locks in all sorrow, finally.

EDITH.

Ah, then my sentence has not been com-  
muted?

[*The CHAPLAIN shakes his head sor-  
rowfully*]

Why do I tremble? Because I am afraid,  
I cannot stand against that dreadful wall.  
Weak is a lonely woman! Do not leave  
me!

[*Rushing again to the window*]

There! star by star the night turns into  
day.

CHAPLAIN.

But stars still shine when all the day is  
past.

EDITH.

O hear the larks and sparrows chirping  
near!

Alas, could I live as they live, awakened  
From slumber by no fearful morning  
beam,

But only bliss upon the unstirred leaves.

[*Turning in sudden terror*]

Death! what a fathomless abyss is death!

[*To the CHAPLAIN*]

An angel's arm cannot that pit destroy  
Despite your teachings of a Paradise  
Which smothers souls in immortality.

[*A knock is heard at the cell door.*

EDITH, trembling with terror, turns  
to the CHAPLAIN]

The hour? O no, O no, as yet 'tis dark.

[*Another knock*]

VOICE FROM WITHOUT.

A visitor—

[*EDITH and the CHAPLAIN approach  
the door as it is pushed open*]

[*Enter SIR JOHN STEELE*]

[*The guards are discovered without*]

[Exit the CHAPLAIN with a smile and gesture of consolation toward EDITH]

SIR JOHN (*clasping EDITH, who falls almost fainting in his arms*).

Edith, my love, my love!

[*Long pause as EDITH weeps on her lover's shoulder*]

[*With desperate appeal*]

O Jesus, Son of His Eternal Mercy!

First and last in midst and without end,  
Why hast Thou so forsaken my beloved?

EDITH (*partly recovering herself, smiling*).

O my dear angel! darling of my soul!  
They could not keep the bars between our hearts.

It is not strange to see that you are here;  
Each moment has been guiding me to you.

SIR JOHN (*in undertones*).

All, all is shadow—

EDITH.

Nay, look in mine eyes  
Whose tears flow out in very happiness  
To lights of heaven. But could this be a dream?

My nature's half transformed from sorrowing.

SIR JOHN (*kissing her passionately*).

Do you not feel these kisses on your lips  
Issuing fresher love as each is given.

EDITH.

A thousand more! But then — how came  
you here?

Some very angel must have planned it,  
dear.

How happened it? how was it possible?

SIR JOHN.

The gracious Chaplain was responsible.  
How he arranged it, that I do not know;  
But I must take you from this place of  
death.

EDITH (*bitterly*).

Aye, lash the rising sun back into night?  
I see no rescue, sweet love — let it pass.

SIR JOHN.

I too am doomed to die before sunset.

[EDITH *drops her head; but suddenly raises it again. A radiant smile lights her countenance*]

EDITH.

Then I shall never leave you, dear, never!  
Life but begins at this the hour we die.

SIR JOHN.

Those eastward stationed clouds shall doff  
their day  
In this rich moment of regaining you.

[*Excitedly*]

I cannot credit your philosophy!  
O death, thou riddle of absurdity!  
Is virtue kindly to the grave-worm's gnaw  
That crawleth into false felicities?

EDITH.

Shame, John, O shame!

SIR JOHN.

What use that I pretend to hide the fear?  
They say that when a life is done, 'tis  
done.

Dust vivifies then falls to nakedness  
Whose very grains destroy vitality:

[*Striking his head with his fist*]

Then from these skulls holding com-  
mingled wrecks

Of soul, doth God by Death dash down  
His Image.

EDITH.

Is this the way you would console? O  
shame!

SIR JOHN.

What certitude have I of yonder Heaven?

EDITH.

In all this coil, where have you left your  
soul?

SIR JOHN.

This sleep unspanned?—those draughts  
of love beyond?

EDITH.

You have come here to mock me in de-  
spair.

No more! no more! I can endure no more.

SIR JOHN.

But here I know, I see that you are mine  
And will forever be while I am man;  
Not soul nor spirit but heart, lips, eyes,  
and hair,  
And with them Love—a dazzling sun—

EDITH (*calmly*).

But still  
Those things are trifles, dear, mere trifles  
now;  
And all are sentenced but the last, our  
Love.

The eyes of Reason see not all. Believe!

SIR JOHN.

How long shall last this parting?

EDITH.

Unto death.  
We are Creation's secret, that is all;  
And in the realm of our departing hours  
Where falls your censure? Dear, now let  
us pray.

SIR JOHN.

Your faith is pure—your love so unde-  
filed.

EDITH.

Then learn your faith from Him Who  
gave me love.

SIR JOHN.

Forgive me, Edith, my soul was torn  
asunder.

[*Again excitedly*]

All this is comforting, but still you shall  
Not die.

EDITH.

Yet stands the charge—all points  
against me.

SIR JOHN.

While I still live I will not let you die.

I—

EDITH (*interrupting him*).

Could not love and live without you, dear:  
In that decree is all your reasoning false.  
My love of record, therefore, seeketh  
death.

Whatever fame we've brought to Eng-  
land's cause,

Let justice in our aftermath prove title.  
So shall we then appear—the loftier  
quest's

At hand, a bridge 'twixt two eternities,  
The one from which we traveled and this  
towards which

We go; a little tarrying place is ended.

[*A sudden knock is heard at the cell*

*door; without further warning enter two guards. The CHAPLAIN is discovered waiting without]*

[*EDITH and SIR JOHN stand in one long embrace. Both are seized roughly by the guards, separated, and pushed through the opening*]

[*The stage is now in total darkness*]

## *SCENE VII*

*Sunrise in the Brussels Prison yard. Edith is discovered before a Prussian firing squad, standing calm and erect; her hands are bound behind her and she is blindfolded.*

EDITH (*as the guards aim their rifles*).

Into Thine Hands, O Lord, into Thine  
Hands.

Lord, I commend my spirit, amen, amen.

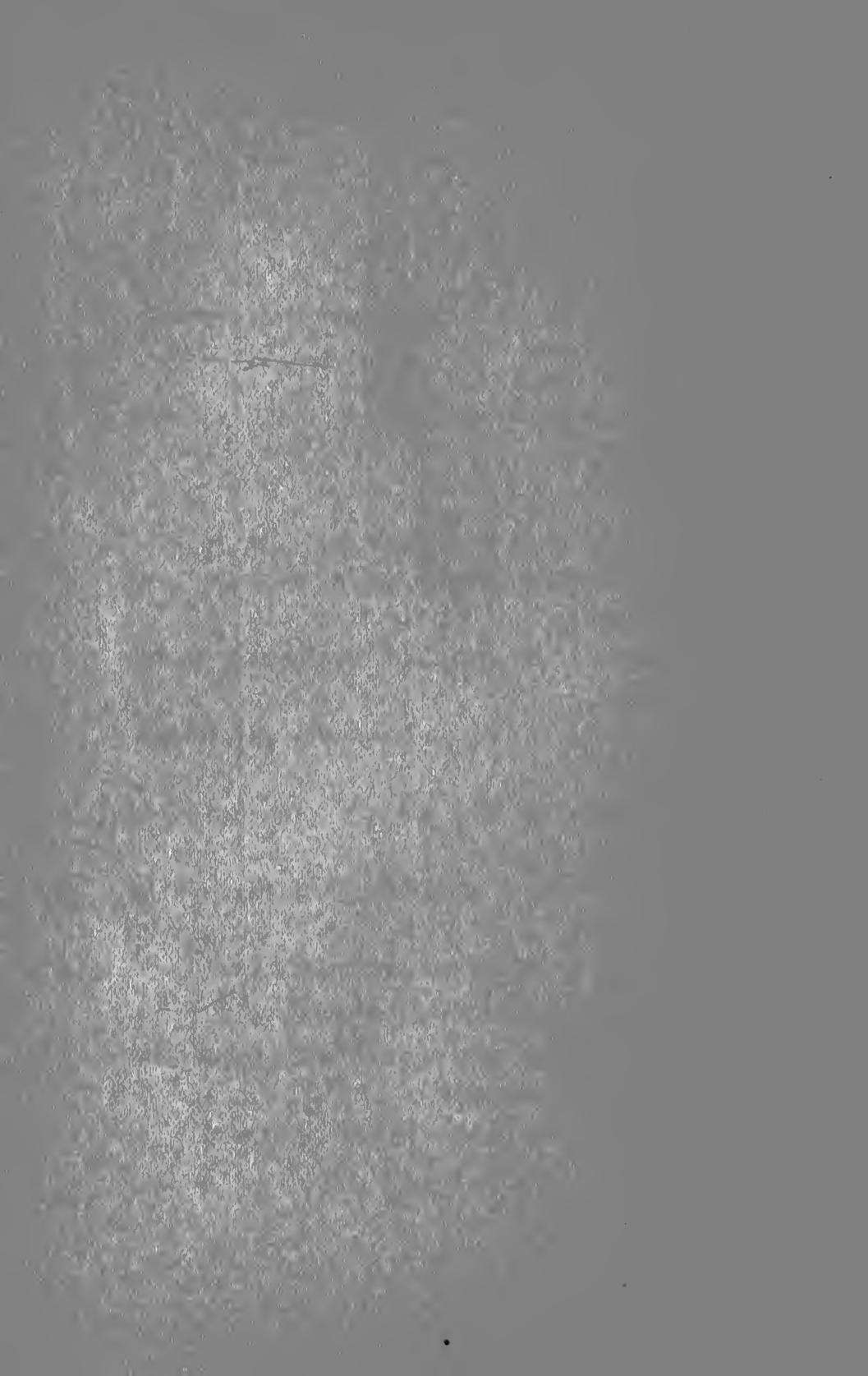
[*Darkness again*]

## *SCENE VIII*

*High noon in the Brussels Prison yard. Sir John is standing before a Prussian firing squad; the men raise their guns and fire. He sinks to the ground.*

CURTAIN

## **SCENE IX**



## *SCENE IX*

*A dark low ante-chamber in Pandemonium reserved for new arrivals.*

*Enter the "All-Highest."*

*He paces back and forth clanking scabbard with mailed fist and gesticulating with withered arm.*

THE "ALL-HIGHEST."

I cannot stand and stare into the dark,  
For this grim room stares back at me.

All turns

To stone; the gasp of strangling seems  
to run

Vile draught and on me sucks and hangs.

'Tis I

Who spinned the planets into fields of  
blood,

Whose million cells did set the world  
aflame,

Turning to ashes all creation's breed.

[*Flourish and rattle of mailed fist*]

With "blood and iron" I'll meet the  
devil's challenge.

I am not undivine, of that I'm certain.

Thou still exaction! It's come to pass,  
My chronicles of war shall e'er be left  
Besmeared though I am down into this  
Hell.

It doth appear that Foch did his part well  
With limbs of that far land across the sea.  
Wherefore have I gone thus so much  
astray?

I, the anointed king of that mapped  
globe,  
Sequestered here! The end of my great  
mission?

What fire that ever raged should ash  
the crown

That hath bedecked my brow? Laugh  
now ye walls!

This chamber seems arranged for one sole  
guest.

I'm cankered o'er with doubts and fears  
that would

Not well consort with my great dynasty.  
But how could I be hurt, being mostly  
God?

O Liberty! to satisfy thy lust  
Dost know that thou hast crucified a god?

O Democracy! thou silly crystal dream,  
Thy guns and fortune thus brought on  
my ruin.

Ugly cell, gape not. O where is Lucifer?  
Cursed be the stars that smile on my cap-  
tivity!

And War, where are thy fascinating eyes,  
Both but the image of myself, great suns  
That never should have waned or set?

Who wrought  
The world in suffocating Death? But  
here

[*He seats himself on a low throne*]  
I'm wont to sit. What once I was, what  
am

I now? In this foul loathsome pit I'll  
seek

To grind, annul the primer works of man  
And make these devil misers generous.

In honor's sake, am I not still War-Lord?  
I've plowed up all the countries with my  
sword.

Be penitent? Fie, 'tis a fool that is con-  
trite.

Ha, fain would I remain in dross here,  
free,

Than by the Will of Heaven be subject  
To the drudge and wiles of over-just Con-  
ceit.

Were I to be but an egg for Foch to gaze  
at,

Or an angel hatched like some low-roost-  
ed lark,

It were a lesser evil that I'm damned.

Look at the ages. O holy piety!

Thinkest thou canst check my wondrous  
power,

Showing that God is hid in my disguise?

Who pulls me down? O spare me mem-  
ory!

I know they're true—the deeds deny I  
not—

Their blood clots there upon the firma-  
ment.

First blame thyself, then judge thy next  
of kin.

Now on the mirror of the world I see  
A glittering phantom, beautiful yet fierce.  
O Belgium! turn away thine unforgiv-  
ing eyes!

Thy churches fired, thy houses tumbled  
down,

Thy children prey to vultures and wild  
beasts,

Why show thyself so marvelous? O light,  
Thou once all kindly friend, America,  
Why sear me, blind me with unmerciful  
gaze?

Is there no aid, thou glimmering glove?  
I, king

Of kings, who was and is! Yet speak I  
folly

Amid this treachery of fire and ice  
And stone. The devils now draw in my  
tears:

They know the very business of this  
hour

And are at hand to ratify the deed.

How I'm betrayed. Ten thousand me-  
nials come

To take stock o'er bankrupt autocracy,  
Enslaving me to droning beggary.

Come, come ye devils who would change  
the scene.

My crown—my friends—have you for-  
saken me?

Mine eyes, look not that way! Where  
shall I go?

Why creeps that burning cloud so near  
my face?

Is this my soul itself I see? Stand! Stop!

[Enter SATAN followed by ATTILA]

SATAN (*to ATTILA, looking curiously about the room*).

Where is he now? this foolishness of man  
Who cumbered earth and now would  
cumber hell?

[ATTILA *points to the "ALL-HIGHEST"*  
*who is seen cringing in a corner*]

Is that he, Attila? dost thou mean that  
Upon its belly? that putrescent thing?

[*Striding closer he gives the "ALL-HIGHEST" a kick*]

Wherefore has conscience fallen so in me,  
That it must bring to mind such spawn  
as this?

O surely now becomes Hell's eye most  
foul

With that sty on its hidden retina.

[*Kicking him again*]

Stand up thou dross! that I may see thy  
face

Or what's remaining of thy features still.

[*The "ALL-HIGHEST" rises, shaking from head to foot*]

The breath from out thy lungs doth give forth stench

That puts my nostrils to a novel torture.  
Why on thy cheeks do I behold such grief?

[*Striking him on each cheek*]

This side and that! Why didst thou lose this war?

THE "ALL-HIGHEST."

O spare me mighty Satan!

SATAN (*twisting one of the victim's arms*).  
Break off, break off!

THE "ALL-HIGHEST."

But let me run headlong back unto earth.

SATAN.

As welcome art thou there as here in Hell:

That I'll consider too in thine indictment.

THE "ALL-HIGHEST."

O wilt thou not have mercy on my soul?  
Rend not my heart for thy conspiracy,

[*Pointing to ATTILA*]

For it was he who came and tempted me.

SATAN (*angrily*).

Thou insolence and swill! in that we  
erred.

So much the greater be thy punishment,  
For all the littleness doth show in thee  
Presented through Failure's mean loath-  
some eye.

Failure makes evil turn against itself  
And prickles the low faculties of shame.  
Poor pallid weakling is the soul of him  
Which cannot hold its own in blood-  
stained life,

But leaves achievement eke from out the  
door.

Hold still, thou cringing fool! Should I  
turn thee

To brutish beast? Nay, nay, they suffer not  
Without a conscience comprehending me  
Nor what was lost from Godly paradise.

ATTILA.

Pardon presumption in me, Lucifer,  
But let him still in shape be man, caressed  
By worms' embraces; or snake his para-  
mour

To sate his lips with those great cruelties,  
Vile propaganda, and those deeds of  
shame

Which he practised upon the plains of  
life.

Trust me to force this venom through his  
veins

With all the thrill that Hell can add to it  
So unimpeded by the bounds of Time.

THE "ALL-HIGHEST."

O spare—

SATAN.

A good suggestion, Attila,  
Who did outwit him so successfully.

[*To himself*]

Ah, I was so afflicted by this sight—  
What pain could I give unsubstantial  
souls

Whose eyes are far less hardened than  
mine own?

[*To ATTILA again*]

Methinks I'll send him through the open  
fields

Of fire and ice; entrails and brain exposed  
To public view eternally. Ha, ha!

[*Several devils appear in the entrance*]

[*To himself*]

'Twould be new sufferings for my menials  
here,

Forced thus to see the vilest schemes in  
coils

That God e'er hid behind a fleshly wall.

[*Summoning the devils to seize his vic-tim he addresses him again*]

Now viper, thou hast heard thy sentence.  
There is

No ear in hell to mercy's warblings,

Nor would I soil my tongue with further  
speech.

[*The devils seize the "ALL-HIGHEST"  
and drag him roughly toward the  
door*]

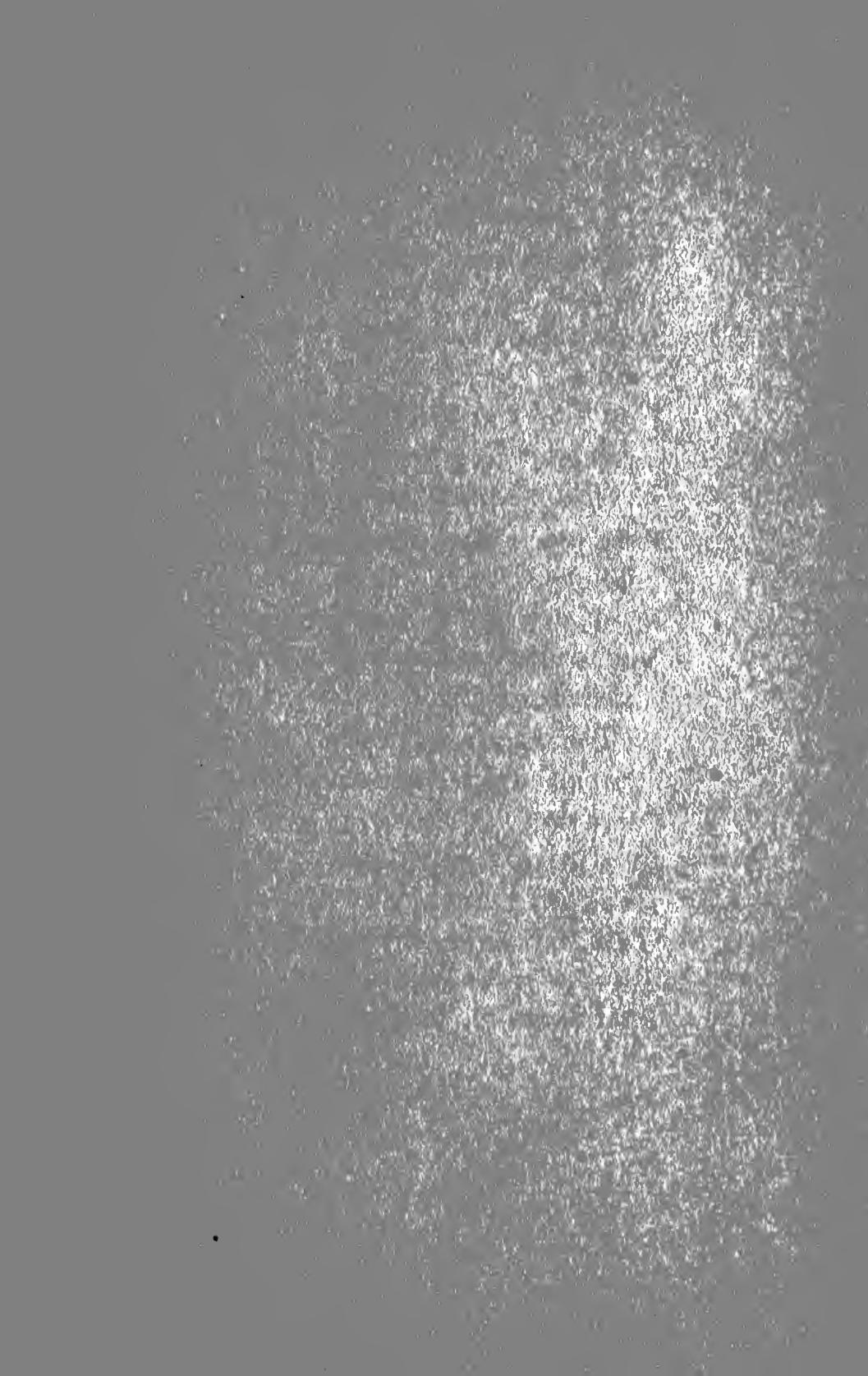
Be thou transparent—opened wide  
apart!

Walk and enjoy thy fulsome memories:

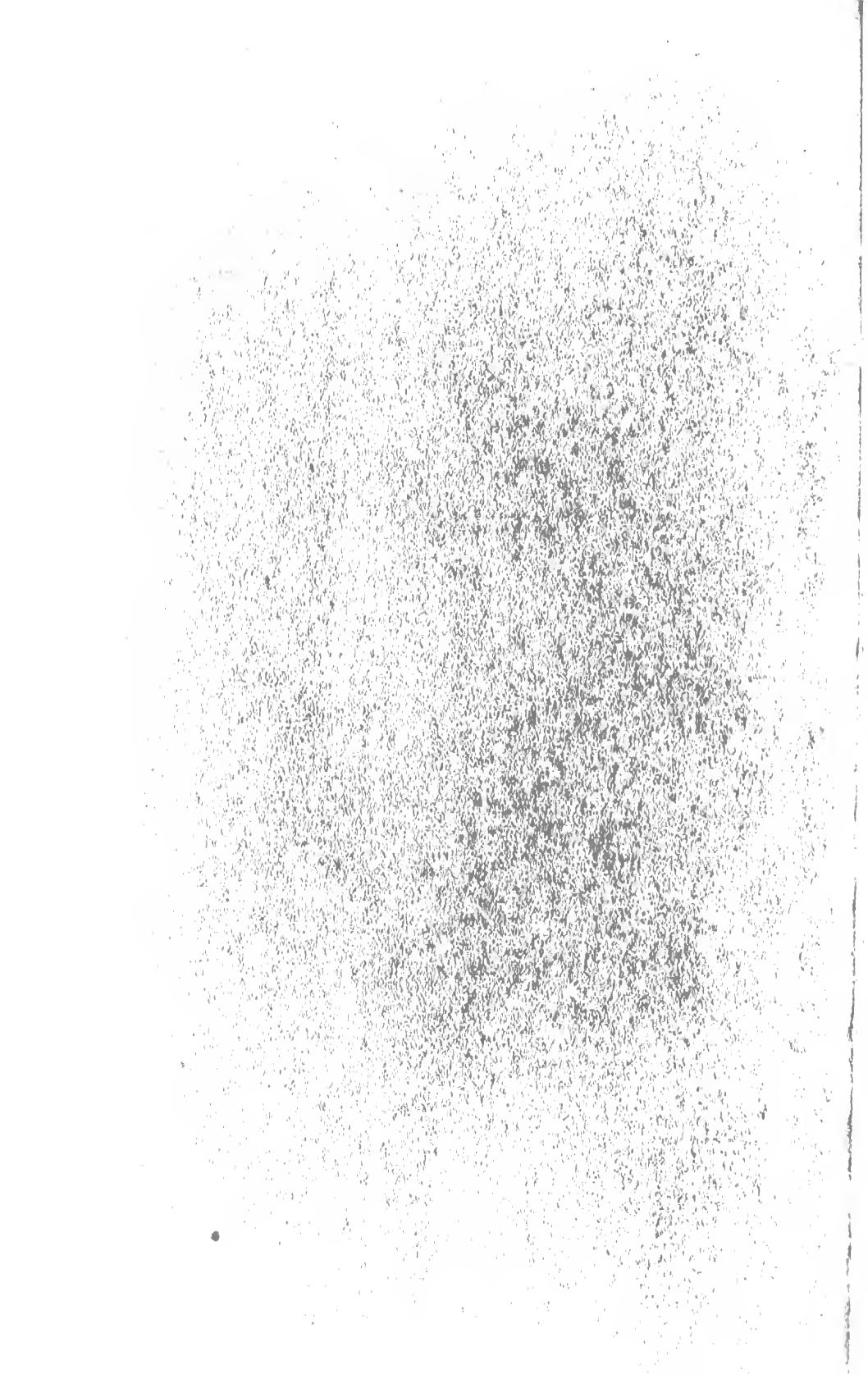
But one great consolation give thy soul

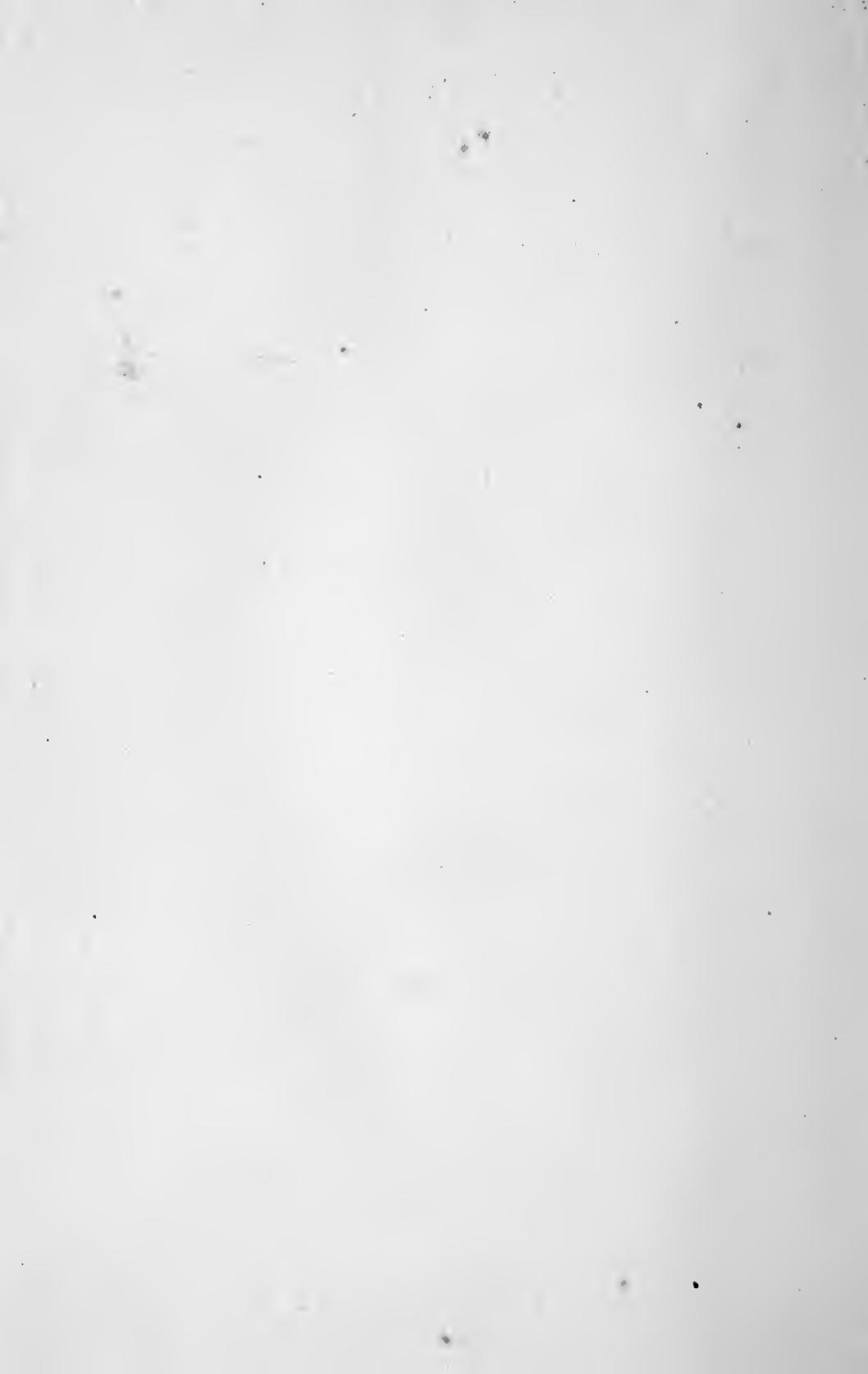
That Satan too must view thy future rôle.

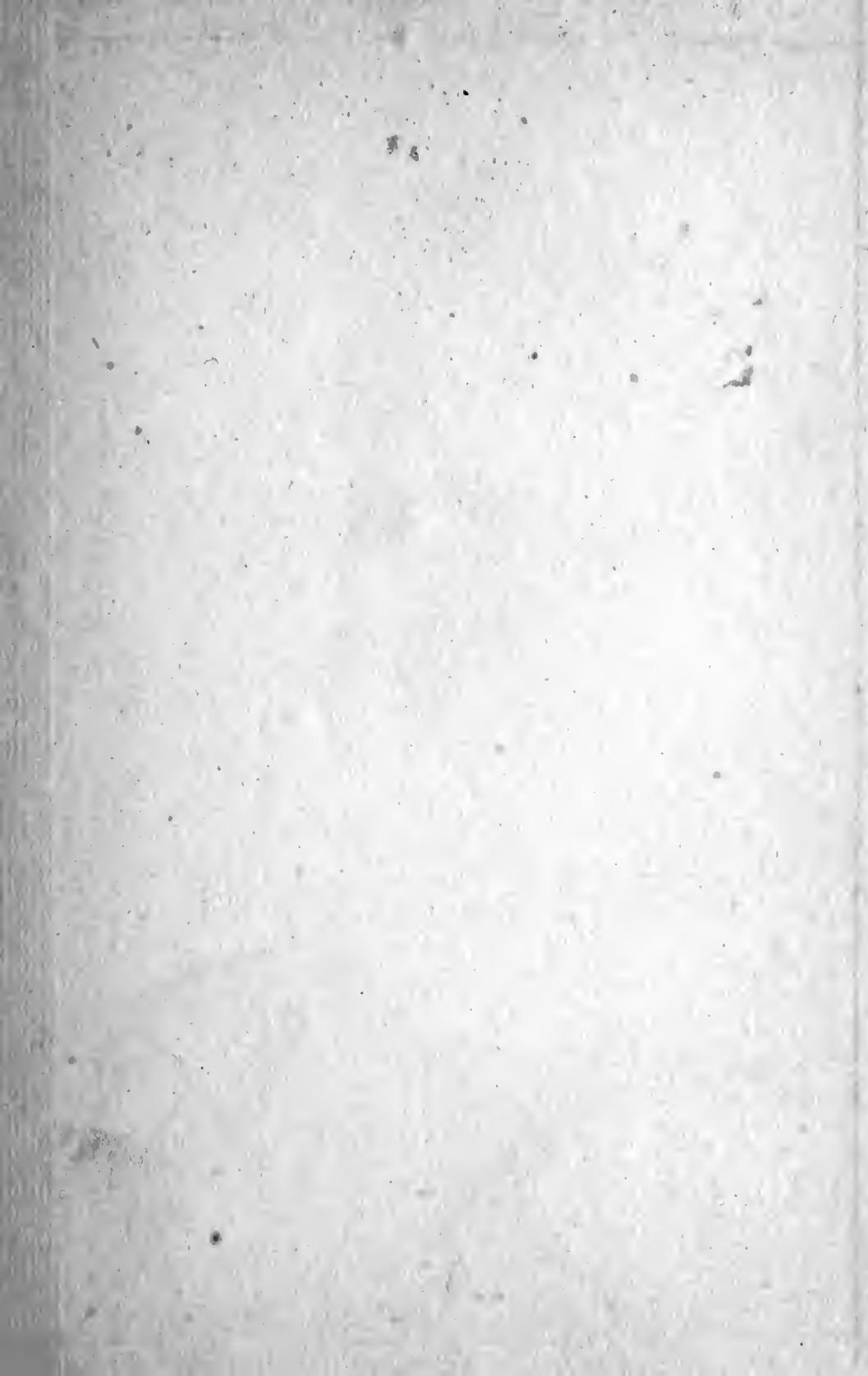
CURTAIN











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